

# THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1876.

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EDINA.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### APPREHENSIONS.

THE fine old house, Eagles' Nest, lay buried in snow. It was Christmas-tide, and Christmas weather. All the Raynor family had assembled within its walls: with the exception of Dr. Raynor and his daughter Edina. Charles had come home from keeping his first term at Oxford; Alfred from school; Frank Raynor and his wife had returned from their sojourn abroad.

For, all these past months, during which we have lost sight of them, Frank and Daisy had been on the Continent. Close upon their departure from Trennach, Frank, through his medical friend, Crisp, was introduced to a lady who was going to Switzerland with her only son, a sickly lad of fifteen, in whom the doctors at home had hardly been able to keep life. This lady, Mrs. Berkeley, proposed to Frank to travel with them as medical attendant on her son, and she had not the least objection to Frank's wife being of the party. So, preliminaries were settled, and they started. Frank considered it a most opportune chance to have fallen to him while he was waiting for the lost money to turn up.

But the engagement did not last long. Hardly were they settled in Switzerland when the lad died, and Mrs. Berkeley returned to England. Frank stayed on where he was. The place and the sojourn were alike pleasant; and, as he remarked to his wife: who knew but he might pick up a practice there, amid the many English resident in the town, or flocking to it as birds of passage? Daisy was just as delighted to remain as he: they had funds in hand, and could afford to throw care to the wind. Even had care shown itself: which it did not. The

young are ever sanguine, rarely gifted with much forethought. Frank and his wife especially lacked it. Some odds and ends of practice did drop in to Frank, just a small case or so, at rare intervals : and they remained stationary for some time in perfect complacency. But when Christmas approached, and Frank found that his five hundred pounds would not hold out for ever, and that the notion of a practice in the Swiss town was but a castle in the air, he took his wife home again. By invitation, they went at once to Eagles' Nest.

The merry Christmas Day had passed, and some of the merry days immediately succeeding to it. On New Year's Day they were bidden to an entertainment at Sir Philip's Stane's ; Major and Mrs. Raynor, Charles and Alice ; a later invitation having come in for Frank and his wife. William Stane was a frequent visitor at Eagles' Nest whenever he was sojourning at his father's ; and, though he had not yet spoken, few could doubt that the chief object to draw him thither was Alice Raynor.

Yes. Sunshine and merry-making, profusion and reckless expenditure reigned within the doors of Eagles' Nest ; but little, save poverty, distress, and dissatisfaction, existed (speaking of the estate) beyond its gates. Mrs. Atkinson had ever been liberal in her care of the estate ; the land had been enriched and thoroughly well kept ; the small tenants and labourers cared for. One thing she had not done so extensively as she might : and that was, improve the dwellings of the labourers. Repairs she had made from time to time ; but the places were really beyond repair. A few of them were like pigsties : and that was the best that could be said. Each tenement wanted one of two things : to be thoroughly renovated and to have an additional sleeping-room built ; or else to be replaced by a new abode. During the last year of Mrs. Atkinson's life, she seemed to wake up suddenly to the necessity of something being done. Perhaps with the approach of death—which approach will often open our eyes to many things that they were closed to before—she saw the supineness she had been guilty of. Street the lawyer was hastily summoned to Eagles' Nest : he was ordered to procure plans and estimates for new dwellings. A long row (some thirty cottages in number) was hastily begun. While the builders were commencing their work, Mrs. Atkinson died. With nearly her last breath, she charged Mr. Street to see that the houses were completed, and that the pigsties (to distinguish them by that name) were also repaired and made healthy.

Mr. Street could only hand over the charge to the inheritor of the estate, Major Raynor. The reader may remember the Major spoke of it to Edina. Mr. Street could not do more than that, or carry out Mrs. Atkinson's wishes in any other way. And the Major did nothing. His will might have been good enough to carry out the charge, but he lacked the means. So much money was required for his own personal

5

wants that he had none to spare for other people. The ready money he came into had chiefly gone in paying his own back debts : until these debts stared him in the face in black and white, he had not believed he owed a tithe of them. Which is a very common experience. So the new dwellings were summarily stopped, and remained as so many skeletons : and the tumble-down pigsties, lacking proper space, and drainage, and whitewash, and everything else that could render them decent and healthy, grew worse day by day, and were an eyesore to spectators and the talk of the neighbourhood.

Not only did *they* suffer from the Major's lack of money and foresight ; there were many other crying wants : these are but given as a specimen. Above all, he was doing no good to the land, spending nothing to enrich it, and sparing necessary and ordinary labour. Perhaps had Major Raynor understood the cultivation and the needs of land, he might have made an effort to nourish his own better : as it was, it could but deteriorate day by day.

This state of things had caused a kind of antagonism to set in between Eagles' Nest and its poor dependents. The labourers and their families grumbled ; the Major, conscious of the state of affairs, and feeling some inward shame in consequence, but knowing at the same time that he was powerless to remedy it, shunned them. When complaints were brought to the house he would very rarely see the complainers. Mrs. Raynor and the elder children, understanding matters but very imperfectly, naturally espoused the Major's cause, and looked upon the small tenants as a most barbarous, insubordinate set of wretches, next kin to insurgents. When the poor wives or children fell sick, no succour was sent to them from Eagles' Nest. With this estrangement reigning, Mrs. Raynor did not attempt to help : not from coldness of heart, but that she considered they did not deserve to be helped, and moreover thought it would be flung back on her if she did attempt it. *There* was where the shoe pinched. The evil dwellings they were used to ; though indeed with every winter and every summer they grew more evil than ever ; but they were not accustomed to neglect in times of need. Mrs. Atkinson had been always a generous mistress : when sickness or sorrow or distress at slack times of work set in, her hand and purse were ever ready. Coals in the severe weather, Christmas cheer, warm garments for the scantily clad ; she had furnished all : and it was the entire lack of this aid that was so much felt now. The winter was unusually severe ; it frequently is so after a very hot summer ; labour was scarce, food dear ; and a great deal of sickness prevailed. So that you perceive all things were not so flourishing in and about Eagles' Nest as they might have been, and Major Raynor's bed was not entirely one of rose leaves.

But, things unpleasant that are out of sight, are, it is said, mostly out of mind—Mr. Blase Pellet told us so much a chapter or two back—

and the discomfort out of doors did not disturb the geniality within. At Eagles' Nest, the days floated on in a round of enjoyment ; they seemed to be one continuous course of pleasure that would never have an end. Daisy Raynor had never been so happy in all her life : Eagles' Nest, she said, was like Paradise.

The music and the wax-lights, the flowers and the evergreens rendered the rooms at Sir Philip Stane's a scene of enchantment. At least it seemed so to Alice Raynor as she entered upon it. Something that you might read about in fairyland, but scarcely see in this prosaic life. William Stane stood near the door, and caught her hand as she and Charles were following their father and mother.

"The first dance is for me, remember, Alice," he whispered. And her pretty cheeks flushed and a half conscious smile of assent parted her lips, as she passed on to Lady Stane.

Lady Stane, a stout and kindly woman in emerald green, received her kindly. She suspected that this young lady might become her daughter-in-law some day or another, and she looked at her more critically than she had ever looked before. Alice could bear the inspection to-night : her new white dress was beautiful ; her face was charming, her manner was modest and graceful. "The most lady-like girl in the room," mentally decided Lady Stane, "and no doubt will have a fair purse of money. William might do worse."

William Stane thought he might do very much worse. There's no doubt he was truly attached to Alice. Not perhaps in the wild and ardent manner which some lovers own to : all natures are not capable of that : but he did love her, and hoped that when he married it was she who would be his wife. He was not ready to marry yet. He was progressing in his profession, but with the proverbial slowness that is said to attend the advancement of barristers ; and he did not mean to speak just at present. Meanwhile he was quite content to make love tacitly ; and he felt sure that his intentions were understood.

His elder brother was not present this evening, and it fell to William to act as such and to dispense his favours, and himself as a partner, pretty equally ; but every moment that he could snatch for Alice, was given to her ; in every dance that he could crib from society's exactions, she was his partner.

"Have you enjoyed the evening, Alice?" he questioned in a whisper, as he was taking her to the carriage at three o'clock in the morning.

"I never enjoyed an evening half so much," was the shyly-breathed answer. And Mr. William Stane got possession of her hand as she spoke, and kept it in his to the last.

If this lighted-hearted carelessness did not come to an end ! If freedom from trouble could but last for ever ! Pleasure first, says



some wise old saw, pain afterwards. With the morning's dawn the pain came to Eagles' Nest.

Amid the letters delivered to Major Raynor was one from Oxford. It enclosed a very heavy bill for wine supplied to his son Charles: heavy, considering Mr. Charles's years, and the short duration of his one sojourn at the University. The Major stared at it, with his spectacles, and without his spectacles; he looked at the heading, he gazed at the foot; and finally when he mastered it he went into a passion, and ordered Charles before him. So peremptory was the summons, that Charles appeared in haste. His outburst of temper, when he found out what the matter was, quite equalled his father's.

"I'm sure I thought you must be on fire down here, sir," said he. "What confounded sneaks they are, to apply to you! I can't understand their doing it."

"Sneaks be shot!" cried the wrathful Major. "Do you owe all this, or don't you? That's the question."

"Why, the letter was addressed to *me*!" exclaimed Charles, who had been examining the envelope. "I must say, sir, you might allow me to open my own letters."

But the Major was guiltless of any ill faith. The mistake was the butler's. He had inadvertently placed the letter amongst his master's letters, and the Major opened it without glancing at the address.

"What does it signify, do you suppose, whether I opened it or you?" demanded the Major. "Not that I did it intentionally. I should have to know of it: you can't pay this."

"They can wait," said Charles.

"Wait! Do you mean to confess to me that you have had all this wine?" retorted the Major, irascible for once. "Why, you must be growing into—into what I don't care to name!"

"You can't suppose that I drank it, sir. The other undergraduates give wine parties, and I have to do the same. They drink the wine; I don't."

"That is, you drink it amongst you," roared the Major; "and a nice disreputable lot you must all be. I understood young men went to college to study; not to drink, and run up bills. What else do you owe? Is this all?"

Charles hesitated in his answer. An untruth he would not tell. The Major saw what the hesitation meant, and it alarmed him. When we become frightened our wrath cools down. The Major dropped into a chair, and lost his fierceness and his voice together.

"Charley," said he in a subdued tone like a whisper, "I have not the money to pay. You know I've not. If it's much, it will ruin me."

"But it is not much, father," returned Charles, his own anger disarmed, and contrition taking its place. "There may be one or two more trilling bills: nothing to speak of."

"What on earth made you run them up?"

"I'm sure I don't know; and I am very sorry for it," said Charles. "These things accumulate in the most extraordinary manner. When you think in your own mind you owe but a few shillings at some place or another, it turns out to be pounds. You have no idea what it is, father!"

"Have I not!" returned the Major significantly. "It is because I have rather too much idea of the insidious way in which debt creeps upon one, that I should like to keep you out of its toils. Charley, my boy, I have been staving off liabilities all my life, and not worried myself in doing it; but it is beginning to tell upon me now. My constitution's changing. I suppose I must be growing fidgety."

"Well, don't let this worry you, father. It's not so much."

"Much or little, it must be paid. I don't want my son to get into bad odour at the University; to have 'debtor' tacked to his name. You are over young for that, Mr. Charles."

Charles remained silent. The Major was evidently in blissful ignorance of the latitude of opinion current amid the Oxonians.

"You go back and dress yourself, Charles; and get your breakfast over; and then, just sit down and make a list of what it is you owe, and I'll see what can be done."

Now in the course of this same morning, it chanced that Frank Raynor took occasion to speak to his uncle about money matters, as connected with his own prospects, which he had not previously entered upon during his present stay. The Major was pacing his study in a gloomy mood when Frank entered.

"You look tired, Uncle Francis. Just as though you had danced all night."

"I leave that to you younger men," returned the Major, drawing his easy chair to the fire. "As to being tired, Frank, I am; though I have not danced."

"Tired of what, uncle?"

"Of everything, I think. Sit down, lad."

"I want to speak to you, Uncle Francis, concerning myself and my plans," said Frank, taking a seat near. "It is time I settled down to something."

"Is it?" was the answer: for the Major's thoughts were elsewhere.

"Why, yes, don't you think it is, sir? The question is, what is it to be? With regard to the bonds for that missing money, uncle? They have not turned up, I conclude?"

"They have not turned up, my boy, or the money either. If they had, you'd have been the first to hear of it."

"What is your true opinion about the money, Uncle Francis?" resumed Frank after a pause. "Will it ever turn up?"

"Yes, Frank, I think it will. I feel fully assured that the money is lying somewhere—and that it will be found sooner or later. I should be sorry to think otherwise; for, as goodness knows, I need it badly enough."

A piece of blazing wood fell off the grate. Frank caught the tongs, and put it up again.

"And I wish it would come to light for your sake also, Frank. You want your share of it, I know."

"Why, you see, Uncle Francis, without money I don't know what to be at. If I were single, I'd engage myself out as assistant to-morrow; but for my wife's sake I wish to take a better position than that."

"Naturally you do, Frank. And so you ought."

"It would be easy enough if I had the money in hand; or if I could with any certainty say when I should have it."

"It's sure to come," said the Major. "Sure."

"Well, I hope so. The difficulty is—when?"

"You must wait a bit longer, my boy. It may turn up any day. To-night, even: to-morrow morning. Never a day passes but I go ferreting into some corner or other of the old house, thinking I may put my hand upon the papers. They are lying in it somewhere, I know, overlooked."

"But I don't see my way clear to wait. Not to wait long. We must have a roof over our heads, and means to keep it up ——"

"Why, you have a roof over your heads," interrupted the Major. "Can't you stay here?"

"I should not like to stay too long," avowed Frank in his candour. "It would be abusing your hospitality."

"Abusing a fiddle-stick!" cried the Major, staring at Frank. "What's come to you? Is the house not large enough?—and plenty to eat in it? I'm sure you may stay here for ever; and the longer you stay the more welcome you'll be. We like to have you."

"Thank you greatly, Uncle Francis."

"Daisy does not want to go away; she's as happy as the day's long," continued the Major. "Just you make yourselves comfortable here, Frank, my boy, until the money turns up and I can hand you over some of it."

"Thank you again, uncle," said Frank, accepting the hospitality in the same free-hearted spirit that it was offered. "For a little while at any rate we will stay with you; but I hope before long to be doing something and to get into a home of my own. I can run up to town from here once or twice a week and be looking out."

"Of course you can."

"Had you been a rich man, Uncle Francis, I would have asked you

to lend me a thousand pounds, or so, to set me up until the nest-egg is found ; but I know you have not got it to lend."

"*Got it to lend!*" echoed the Major in a tone of dismayed astonishment. "Why, Frank, my boy, I want such a sum lent to myself. I wish to my heart I knew where to pick it up. Here's Charles must have money now : has come home from Oxford with a pack of debts at his back !"

"Charles has !" exclaimed Frank in surprise.

"And would like to make me believe that all the rest of the young fellows there run up the same bills ! every man Jack of 'em ! No, no, Master Charley : you don't get me to take in *that*. Young men can be steady at college as well as at home if they choose to be. Charley's just one that's led any way. He is young, you see, Frank : and he is thrown there, I expect, amid a few rich blades to whom money is no object, and must needs do as they do. The result is, he has made I don't know what liabilities, and I must pay. Oh, it's all a worry and bother together !"

Not intentionally, but by chance, Frank, on quitting his uncle, came upon Charles. Looking into a room in search of his wife, there sat Charley at a table, pen and ink and paper before him, setting down his debts, so far as he could judge of and recollect them. Frank went in and closed the door.

"Can I help you in any way, Charley ? Uncle Francis has been telling me."

Charles let off a little of his superfluous discomfort in abuse of the people who had presumed to trouble him with the wine bill. Frank sat down, and drew the paper towards him.

"I had no idea it could be as much as that, Frank," was the rueful avowal. "And I wish with all my heart their wine parties and their fast living had been at the bottom of the sea !"

"Is it as much, Charley ?"

"To tell the truth, I'm afraid it's more," said Charles with candour. "I've only made a guess at the other amounts, and I know I've not put down too much. That tailor is an awful man for sticking it on : as are all the rest of the crew, for the matter of that. I was trying to recollect how many times I've had horses, and traps, and things ; and I can't."

"Does Uncle Francis know it comes to all this ?"

"No. And I don't care to let him know. Things seem to worry him so much now. I do wish that lost money could be found !"

"Just what your father and I have been wishing," cried Frank. "Look here, Charley. I have a little left out of my five hundred pounds. You shall have the half of it : just between ourselves, you know : and then the sum my uncle must find will not look so formidable to him. Nay, no thanks, lad : would you not all do as much for me—

and more? And we are going to stay on here for a time—and that will save my pocket.”

It was simply impossible for Frank Raynor to see a difficulty of this kind, or indeed of any kind, and not help to relieve it if he had help in his power. That he would himself very speedily require the money he was now giving away, was all too probable: but he was content to forget that in Charley's need.

The one individual person in all the house that Charles would have kept from the knowledge of his folly—and in his repentance he did look upon it as folly most extreme—was his mother. He loved her dearly; and he had the grace to be ashamed, for her sake, of what he had done, and to hope that she would never know it. A most fallacious hope, as he was soon to find, for Major Raynor had taken up the news to her with open mouth.

She was sitting on the low sofa in her dressing-room that evening at dusk, when Charles went in. The firelight played on her face, showing its look of utter weariness, and the traces of tears.

“What's the matter, mother?” he asked, sitting down beside her and taking her hand. “Are you ill?”

“Not ill, Charley,” she answered. “Only tired and—and out of sorts.”

“What has tired you? Last night, I suppose. But you have been resting all day.”

“Not last night particularly. So much fast living does not suit me.”

“Fast living!” exclaimed Charles in a wondering accent. “Is it the gravies?—or the plum-puddings?”

Mrs. Raynor could not forbear a smile. “I was not thinking of the table, Charles: the gravies and the puddings. We seem to have no rest. It is excitement always, nothing but excitement. We went out last night; we go out to dinner to-morrow night; people come here the next night. Every day that we are at home there's something; if it's not luncheon and afternoon tea, it's dinner; and if it's not dinner, it's supper. I have to think of it all; the entertainments and the dress, and everything; and to go out when you go; and—and I fear it is getting rather too much for me.”

“You lie up, mother, for a few days,” advised Charles affectionately. “Keep here by your own fire, and turn things over to Alice and the servants. You will soon be all right again.”

Mrs. Raynor did not answer. She had Charles's hand now, holding it between both of hers, and was looking steadfastly at the flickering blaze. A silence ensued. Charles lost himself in a train of thought.

“What about this trouble of yours, Charley?”

It was a very unpleasant waking-up for him. Of all things, this was what he had wanted kept from her. His ingenuous face—and it was an ingenuous face in spite of the wine bills—flushed deeply with annoyance.

"It's what you need not have heard about, mother. I came away from Oxford without paying a few pounds I owe there; that's all. There need be no fuss about it."

"I hear of wine bills, and hired horses, and things of that kind. Oh my dear, *need* you have entered into that sort of fast life?"

"Others enter into it," said Charley.

"It is not so much the cost that troubles me," added Mrs. Raynor, in a loving tone; "that can be met somehow. It is ——" she stopped as if seeking for words.

"It is what, mother?"

"Charley, my dear, what I think of is this—that you may be falling into the world's evil ways. It is so easy to do it; you young lads are so inexperienced and confiding; you think all is fair that looks fair; that no poison lurks in what has a specious surface. And oh, my boy, you know that there is a world after this world; and if you were to fall too deeply into the ways of *this*, to get to love it, to be unable to do without it, you might never gain the other. Some young lads that have fallen away from God, have not cared to find Him again; never have found Him."

"There has been no harm," said Charley. "And I assure you I don't often miss chapel."

"Charley, dear, there's a verse in Ecclesiastes that I often think of," she resumed in a low sweet tone. "All mothers think of it, I fancy, when their sons begin to go out in the world."

"In Ecclesiastes?" repeated Charley.

"The verse that Edina illuminated for us once when she was staying at Spring Lawn. It was her doing it, I think, that helped to impress it so much on my memory."

"I remember it, mother mine."

The verse was this:

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

## CHAPTER XX.

### A TIGER.

THE late spring flowers were blooming; the air was soft and balmy. Easter was that year nearly as late as it could be; in fact, April was drawing to its close; and when Easter comes so late as that, it generally brings with it glowing sunshine.



Eagles' Nest, amid other favoured spots, seemed to be as bright as the day was long. Once more Major Raynor had all his children about him; also Frank and Daisy. For anything that could be seen on the surface, merry hearts reigned universally; none of them seemed to have a care in the world.

Frank decidedly had not. Sanguine and light-hearted, he was content as ever to let the future take care of itself. Yielding to persuasive hospitality, he still stayed on at Eagles' Nest. His wife expected to be laid up in the course of a month or two; and where, asked the Major, could she be better attended to than at Eagles' Nest? Daisy of course wished to stay: she should feel safe, she said, in the care of Mrs. Raynor. Twenty times at least had Frank run up to town to see if he could pick up any news, or hear of any place to suit him, Delusive dreams often presented themselves to his mental vision, of some doctor, rich in years and philanthropy, who might be willing to take him in for nothing to share his first-class practice. As yet the benevolent old gentleman had not been discovered, but Frank quite believed he must exist somewhere.

Another thing had not been discovered: the missing money. But Major Raynor, sanguine as ever was his nephew, did not lose faith in its existence. It would come to light some time he felt certain, and so he never ceased to assure Frank. Embarrassments decidedly increased upon the Major, chiefly arising from the lack of ready cash: for the greater portion of *that* was sure to be forestalled before it came in. Still, a man who enjoys more than two thousand per annum cannot be so badly off: so that on the whole Major Raynor led an easy, indolent, and self-satisfactory life. Had they decreased their home expenses, it would have been all the better: and they might have done that very materially, and yet not touched on home comforts. But neither Major nor Mrs. Raynor knew how to set about retrenchment: and so the senseless profusion went on.

"What is there to see, Charley?"

The questioner was Frank. In crossing the grounds, some little distance from home, he came upon Charles Raynor. Charles was stooping to screw his neck over the corner of a stile by which the high hedge was divided that bordered the large, enclosed, three-cornered tract of grass-land known as the common. On one side of this common were those miserable dwellings, the pigsties: in a line with them ran the row of new skeletons, summarily stopped in erection. Opposite stood some pretty detached cottage-houses, inhabited by a somewhat better class of people; while this high hedge—now budding into summer bloom, and flanked with a sloping bank, rich in moss, and flowering weeds, and wild blossoms—bordered the third side. In one corner, between the hedge and the bettermost houses, flourished a small thick grove of trees. It all belonged to Major Raynor.

"Nothing particular," said Charley, in answer to the question. "I was only looking at a fellow."

Frank sent his eyes ranging over the green space before him. Three or four paths ran along it in different directions. A portion of it was railed off by wooden fencing, and on this some cattle grazed; but on most of it the grass was growing, intended for the mower in a month or two's time. Frank could not see a soul; and said so. Some children, indeed, were playing in front of the huts; but Charles had evidently not alluded to them: his gaze had been directed to the opposite side, near the grove.

"He has disappeared among those trees," said Charles.

"Who was it?" pursued Frank: for there was something in his young cousin's tone and manner suggestive of anxiety, and it awoke his own curiosity.

Charles turned round and put his back against the stile. He had plucked a small green twig from the hedge, and was twirling it about between his lips.

"Frank, I am in a mess.—Keep a look-out yonder, and if you see a stranger, tell me."

"Over-run the constable at Oxford this term, as before?" questioned Frank, leaping to the truth by instinct.

Charles nodded. "And I assure you, Frank," he added, attempting excuse for himself, "that I no more intended to get into debt this last term than I intended to hang myself. When I went down after Christmas, I had formed the best resolutions in the world. I told the mother she might trust me. Nobody could have wished to keep straighter than I wished, and somehow ——"

"You didn't," put in Frank at the pause.

"I have managed to fall into a fast set, and that's the truth," confessed Charles. "And I think the very deuce is in the money. It runs away without your knowing how."

"Well, the tradespeople must wait," said Frank cheerfully; for he was just as genial over this trouble as he would have been over pleasure. "They have to wait pretty stiffly for others."

"The worst of it is, I have accepted a bill or two," cried Charley ruefully. "And—I had a writ served upon me the last day of term."

"Whew!" whistled Frank. "A writ?"

"One. And I expect another. Those horrid bills—there are two of them—were drawn at only a month's date. Of course the time's out; and the fellow wouldn't renew; and—and I expect there'll be the dickens to pay. The amount is not much: each fifty pounds; but I have not the ghost of a shilling to meet it with."

"What do you owe besides?"

"As if I knew! There's the tailor, and the bootmaker, and the livery stableman, and the wine man —— Oh, I can't recollect."

Had Frank possessed the money, in pocket or prospective, he would have handed out help to Charles there and then. But he did not possess it. He was at a nonplus.

"When once a writ's served, they can take you, can't they?" asked Charles, stopping to pluck a pretty pink blossom from the bank, the twig being bitten away to nothing.

"I think so," replied Frank : who had, himself, contrived to steer clear of these unpleasant shoals, and knew no more of their power, or non-power, than Charles did.

"Well, then, I think I am going to be arrested," continued Charles, dropping his voice, and turning round to face the common again. "It's rather a blue look-out. I should not so *much* mind it for myself, I think : better men than I have had to go through the same : but for the fuss there'll be at home."

"The idea of calling yourself a man, Charley ! You're but a boy yet."

"By the way, talking of that, Jones of Corpus told me a writ could not be legally served upon me as I was not of age. Jones said he was sure of it. What do you think, Frank?"

"I don't know. But I should suppose that the very fact of the writ having been served upon you is a proof that it can be done, and that Jones of Corpus is wrong. William Stane could tell you : he must have all points of the law at his fingers' ends."

"But I don't care to ask William Stane. May be, they take it for granted that I am of age. Any way, I got served with the writ. And unless I am mistaken," added Charles gloomily, "a fellow has followed me here, and is dodging my heels to arrest me."

"What are your grounds for thinking it, Charley ? Have you seen any suspicious person about ?"

"Yes, I have. Before you came up just now, I ——"

The words were broken off suddenly. Charles leaped aside from the stile to hide himself behind the hedge. Some individual was emerging from the grove of trees ; and he, it was evident, had caused the movement.

"If he turns his steps this way, tell me, Frank, and I'll make a dash homewards through the oak-coppice," came the hurried whisper.

"All right. No. He is making off across the common."

"That may be only a ruse to throw me off my guard," cried Charley from the hedge. "Watch. He will come over here full pelt in a minute. He looks just like a tiger, with that great mass of brown beard. He is a tiger."

Frank, leaning his arms on the stile, scanned the movements of the "Tiger." The Tiger was at some distance, and he could not see him clearly. A thin tiger, of middle height and apparently approaching middle age, dressed in a suit of grey, with a slouching hat on his brows,

and a fine brown beard. But the Tiger, whomsoever he might be, appeared to entertain no hostile intentions for the present moment, and was strolling leisurely in the direction of the huts. Presently Frank spoke.

"He is well away now, Charley: too far to distinguish you, even should he turn round. There's no danger."

Charley came out from the hedge, and took up his former position at the extreme corner of the stile, where he was partially hidden. Every vestige of colour had forsaken his face. He was but young yet: not much more than a boy, as Frank said: and unfamiliar with these things.

"I saw him yesterday for the first time," said he to Frank. "While wondering in a lazy kind of a way who he was and what he wanted here, a great rush of fear came over me. I thought he must be a sheriff's officer. Why the idea should have flashed on me in that sudden way—and the fear—I cannot tell; but it did. I made the best of my way in-doors, and did not stir out again. This morning I said to myself what a simpleton I had been—that I had no grounds for fearing the man, except that he was a stranger; and I came out full of bravery. The first person I saw upon proceeding to cross this stile was he; just in the same spot, close to the trees, where I saw him yesterday; and the rush of fear came over me again.—It's of no good your laughing, Frank: I can't help it: I never was a coward before."

"I was not laughing. Did he see you?"

"No. Neither time, I think. I'm sure he is looking after me. If I were well up in funds, I'd be off somewhere and stay away."

"You could not stay away for ever."

"There's the worst of it. But then, you see, that money may turn up, and put all things straight."

"Well, you may be mistaken in the man, Charley; and I hope you are. Let us go in."

William Stane was at home for these Easter holidays, and still, as heretofore, the shadow of Alice Raynor. It chanced that this same afternoon, they encountered the Tiger—as, from that day, Charles and Frank both called him in private. Strolling along side by side under the brilliant afternoon sun, in that silence which is most eloquent of love, with the birds singing melodiously above them, and the very murmur of the waving trees speaking a sweet language to their hearts, they came upon him, this stranger in grey, sitting on the stump of a tree. The trees, mostly beeches, were thick about there, the path branched off sharply at a right angle, and they did not see him until they were close up. In fact, William Stane had to make a step or two of *détour* to pass without touching him. Perhaps it was his unexpected appearance in that spot, or that it was not usual to see strangers, or else his peculiar look, with the slouching hat and the bushy

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beard ; but certain it was, that he especially attracted their attention ; somewhat of their curiosity.

"What a strange-looking man !" exclaimed Alice, under her breath, when they had gone some distance. "Did you not think so, William ?"

"Queerish. Does he live here? I wonder if he is aware that he is trespassing?"

"Papa lets anyone come on the grounds that likes to," replied Alice. "It's a stranger. I never saw him before."

"Oh, it must be one of the Easter excursionists. Escaped from smoky London to enjoy a day or two of the pure air of the Kentish Wolds."

"As you have done," said she.

"As I have done. I only wish, Alice, I could enjoy it oftener."

The words and the tender tone alike bore a precious meaning to her ear. His eyes met hers, and lingered there.

"I am getting on excellently well," he continued. "By the end of this year, I make no doubt I shall be justified in—in quitting my chambers and taking a house. Perhaps before that."

"Look at that spray of hawthorn !" exclaimed Alice, darting to a hedge they were now passing, for she knew too well what the words implied. "Has it not come out early ! It is in full bloom."

"Shall I gather it for you ?"

"No. It would be a pity. It looks so well there, and everybody that passes by can enjoy it. Do you know, I never see the flowering hawthorn but I think of that good old Scotch song, 'Ye banks and braes.' I don't know why."

"Let us sit down here," said he, as they came to a rustic seat amid the trees. "And now, Alice, if you would sing that good old song the charm would be perfect."

She laughed. "What charm ?"

"The charm of—everything. Of the day and hour, the white and pink may budding in the hedges, of the wild flowers we crush with our feet, of the blue sky and the green trees, of the sunshine and the shade, of the singing birds and the murmuring leaves, and of—you."

Not another word from either of them just yet. William Stane had let his hand fall on hers. Her head was slightly turned from him, her cheeks were blushing, her heart was beating : it was again another interval of that most sweet and eloquent silence. Alice had taken off her hat, which hung by the strings from her arm, and her bright brown hair looked almost golden in the sunlight.

"Won't you begin, Alice? The little birds 'warbling through the flowering thorn' are waiting to hear you. So am I."

And as if she had no power to resist his will, she began at once, without one dissenting murmur, and sang the song to the end. Save

for the birds above them, there were no listeners: no rover was likely to be near that solitary spot. Her voice was sweet, but not loud; every syllable was spoken distinctly. To sit there for ever, and not be disturbed, would be Eden.

“And my false lover stole my rose,  
But ah! he left the thorn wi’ me.”

Scarcely had the echoing melody of the last words died away, when the sound of unexpected footsteps was heard approaching, and there advanced into view a woman well known to Alice; one Sarah Croft, the wife of a man who was employed on the estate. They lived in one of those miserable dwellings on the common, but were civil and quiet; somewhat independent in manners, but never joining in the semi-rebellion that reigned. She looked miserably poor. Her blue cotton gown, though clean, was in rags, her old shawl would hardly hang together, the black bonnet on her head might have been used to frighten the crows. She dropped a courtesy and was passing onwards, when Alice inquired after her sick children.

“They be no better, Miss Raynor, thank ye,” she answered, halting in front of the bench and standing to face those on it. “The little one, she be took sick now, as well as the two boys. I’ve got a fine time on’t.”

“Why don’t you have a doctor to them?” said Alice.

“More nor a week agone I went up to the parish and telled ’em I must have a doctor to my children; but he never come till yesterday.”

“What did he say?”

“I’ll tell ye what he said, Miss Raynor, if ye like. He said doctors and doctors’ stuff was o’ no good, so long as the houses remained what they was—pes-ti-fe-rus. That was the word, pes-ti-fe-rus. I should not have remembered it, though, but for Jetty’s lodger repeating of the very self-same word to me a minute or two agone. I’ve just passed him. He’s a sitting down yonder under the beeches.”

Alice, as well as William Stane, instantly recalled the man in grey they had seen sitting there. “Jetty’s lodger!” repeated Alice. “What lodger?”

“Some stranger what’s a-staying in the place, Miss Raynor. He come into it one morning, a week agone, and took Jetty’s rooms. They was to let.”

“What is he staying here for?”

“To pry into folks’ business, I think,” replied the woman. “He’s always about, here, there, and everywhere; one can’t stir out many yards but one meets him. Saturday last, he walks right into our place without as much as knocking; and there he turns hisself round and about, looking at the rotten floor and the dripping walls, and snifing at the bad smell that’s always there, just as if he had as much right inside



as a king. 'Who is your landlord?' says he, 'and does he know what a den this is?' So I told him that our landlord was Major Raynor at Eagles' Nest, and that he did know, but that nothing was done for us. He have gone, I hear, into some o' the other houses as well."

The woman's tone was quite civil, but there could be no doubt that, in her independence, she was talking at Alice as the daughter of Major Raynor.

"As I passed him now he asked me whether my sick children was better—just as you have, Miss Raynor. I told him they was worse. 'And worse they will be, and never better, and all the rest of you too,' says he, 'as long as you inhabit them pes-ti-fe-rus dens!'"

Alice drew her head up in cold disdain, vouchsafing no further word, and feeling very angry at the implied reproach. The woman dropped a slight curtsy and went on her way.

"How insolent they all are!" exclaimed Alice to Mr. Stane. "That Sarah Croft would have been abusive in another moment."

"Their cottages are bad," returned the young man, after a pause.

"Could nothing be done, I wonder, to make them a little better?"

"It is papa's business, not mine," remarked Alice in semi-resentment.

"And the idea of that strange man presuming to interfere! I wonder what he means by it?"

"He is looking about him by way of filling up his time; which must hang rather monotonously on his hands down here, I presume, away from his books and ledgers," remarked Mr. Stane. "It is the way of the world, Alice; people must interfere in what does not concern them. Nay, just a few moments longer," he said, for she had put her hat on, and was rising to depart. "To-morrow I shall have no such pleasant and peaceful seat to linger in; I shall not have you. How delightful it all is!"

And so, the disturbing interruption forgotten, Alice let fall her hat again, and they sat on in the balmy air, under the blue of the smiling sky, with the green foliage about them springing into life and beauty, type of another Life that must succeed our own winter, and the little songsters overhead warbling their joyous songs. Can none of us, grey now with care and work, and years, remember just such an hour spent in our own sweet spring-time?—when all around spoke to our hearts in one unmixed love-strain of melodious harmony, and the future looked like a charmed scroll that could but bring intense happiness in the unrolling?

"Take my arm, Alice," he said in a half whisper, when they at length rose to return.

She did take it, her face and her heart one hot glow. Took it timidly and with much self-consciousness, never having been in the habit of taking it, or he of offering it. Her hand trembled as it lay within his arm; each might have heard the other's heart beat. And

so in the bliss of this, their first love-dream, they sauntered home through the grounds, choosing pleasant glades and mossy by-ways, and arrived to find Eagles' Nest in a commotion.

Mrs. Frank Raynor had been taken seriously and unexpectedly ill. Doctors were sent for; servants ran about. And William Stane said farewell, and went home from an afternoon that would ever remain as a green spot on his memory. It was his last day of holiday.

With the morning, Daisy lay in great danger. The illness, not expected for a month or two, had come on now. In one sense of the word the event was over, but not the danger; and the baby, not destined to see the light, was gone.

It was perhaps unfortunate that on this same morning, Frank should receive an urgent summons to Trennach. Edina wrote. Her father was very ill; ill, it was feared, unto death; and he most earnestly begged Frank to travel to him with all speed, for he had urgent need of seeing him. Edina said that, unless her father should rally, three or four days were the utmost limit of life accorded to him by the doctors: she therefore begged of Frank to lose no time in obeying the summons; and she added that her father desired her to say the journey should be no cost to him.

"What a distressing thing!" cried Frank, in blank dismay, showing the letter to the Major. "I cannot go. It is impossible that I can go while Daisy lies in this state."

"Good gracious!" said the Major, rubbing his head, as he was sure to do on any emergency. "Well, I suppose you can't, my boy. Poor Hugh!"

"How *can* I! Suppose I were to go, and—and she died?"

"Yes, to be sure. You must wait until she is in less danger. I hope with all my heart Hugh will rally. And Daisy too."

Frank sat down and wrote a few words to his uncle, telling him why he could not start that day, but that he would do so the moment his wife's state allowed it. He wrote more fully, but to the same effect, to Edina. Perhaps on the morrow, he added. The morrow might bring better things.

But on the morrow Daisy was even worse. A high fever had set in. Frank wrote again to Trennach, but he could not leave Eagles' Nest. Some days went on; days of peril: Daisy was hovering between life and death. And on the first day that a very faint indication of improvement was perceptible and the medical men said she might now live, that there was a bare chance of it but no certainty; that same day the final news came from Trennach, and it was too late for Frank to take the journey. Dr. Raynor was dead.

The tidings came by letter from Edina: written to Frank. It was but a short note, just giving a few particulars. Within this note, how-

ever, was a more bulky letter, sealed and marked "Private." Frank chanced to be alone at the moment, and opened it with some curiosity. On a single sheet of enveloping paper, enclosing a letter from Dr. Raynor, were the following lines from Edina :

"My poor father was so anxious to see you, dear Frank, at the last that it disturbed his peace. Of course you could not come, under the circumstances ; he saw that ; but he said over and over again, and groaned when he said it, that your not coming was most unfortunate, and to you might be disastrous. At the different hours in the day and night when a train was due, nothing could exceed the eagerness with which he looked out for you, and his restlessness when it grew too late to admit hope that you had come. The day before he died when he knew the end was approaching and he should not live to see you, he caused himself to be propped up in bed and had pen and ink brought that he might write to you. He watched me seal up the letter when it was finished, and charged me to send it to you when all was over, but to be sure to enclose it privately, and to tell you to open and read it when you were alone.

E. R."

Sending Edina's note of the demise to Major Raynor by a servant, Frank carried these lines and the Doctor's letter to his chamber : thereby obeying injunctions, but nevertheless wondering at them very much. What could his uncle have to say to him necessitating secrecy ? Breaking the seal, he ran his eyes over the almost illegible lines, that the dying hand had traced.

"My dear Nephew Frank,—I wanted to see you. I ought not to have put it off so long. But this closing scene has come upon me somewhat suddenly ; and now I cannot write all I ought to, and should wish : and I must, of necessity, write abruptly.

"*Are you conscious of being in any danger ?* Have you committed any act that could bring you under the arm of the law ? If so, take care of yourself. A dreadful rumour was whispered in my ears by Andrew Float, connecting you with the hitherto unexplained fate of Bell the miner. I charged Float to be silent—and I think he will be, for he is a kind and good man, and only spoke to me that I might put you on your guard—and I questioned Blase Pellet, from whom Float had heard it. Pellet was sullen, obstinate, would not say much ; but he did say he could hang you, and *would* do it if you offended him or put yourself in his way. I could not get anything more from him, and it was not a subject that I cared to minutely inquire into, or could pursue openly.

"My boy, you know best what grounds there may be for this half-breathed accusation, whether any or none. I have hardly had a minute's

peace since it reached me, now three weeks ago : in fact, it has, I believe, brought on the crisis with me somewhat before it would otherwise have come. At one moment I say to myself it is a malicious invention, an infamous lie, I know my boy Frank too well to believe this, or anything else against him : the next moment I shudder at the tale and at the possibility of what may have been enacted. Perhaps through passion—or accident—or—I grow confused : I know not what I would say.

"Oh my boy, my nephew, my dear brother Henry's only child ! my heart is aching with dismay and doubt. I do believe you are innocent of all intention to harm ; but—my sight is growing dim. *Take care of yourself.* Hide yourself if need be (and you best know whether there be need, or not) from Blase Pellet. It is he who would be your enemy. I see it ; and Andrew Float sees it ; though we know not why or wherefore. In any obscure nook of this wide world, shelter yourself from him. If he does indeed hold power in his hand, it may be your only chance of safety. I can write no more. God bless and help you ! Farewell. Your loving and anxious Uncle Hugh."

Frank Raynor may have drawn many a deep breath in his life, but never so deep a one as he drew now. Mechanically he folded the letter, and placed it in an inner pocket.

"Are you there, sir ?"

The question came from outside the door, in the voice of one of the servants. Frank opened it.

"Lunch is on the table, sir."

"Is it ?" returned Frank, half bewildered. "I—I don't want any to-day, James. Just say so. I am going out for a stroll."

The letters from Cornwall were never delivered at Eagles' Nest until the mid-day post. Frank took his hat, and went out ; bending his steps whithersoever they chose to take him, so that he might be alone.

Strolling on mechanically, in deep thought, he plunged into a dark coppice, and asked himself what he was to do. The letter had disturbed him in no common degree. It had taken all his spirit, all his elasticity out of him : and that was saying a great deal of Frank Raynor.

"I wish I could hang Blase Pellet !" he burst forth in his torment and perplexity. "He deserves it richly. To disturb my poor uncle with his malicious tongue ! Sneak !"

But Frank was unconsciously unjust. It was not Dr. Raynor that Blase Pellet had disturbed. To do Blase justice, he was vexed that the Doctor should have heard it, for he held him in great respect and would not willingly have grieved him. In an evil moment, when Blase had taken rather more to drink than was quite necessary—a very rare occurrence with him, almost unprecedented—he had dropped the dangerous words to Andrew Float.

"Yes, I must hide myself from him, as my uncle says," resumed Frank, referring to the advice in the letter "He could be a dangerous enemy. For my own sake; for—everybody's sake, I must keep myself where he cannot find me."

Emerging from the coppice to the open ground, Frank lifted his eyes, and saw, standing near him, the man in grey, whom they had christened the Tiger. He was leaning against the tree with bent head and folded arms, apparently in deep thought. All in a moment, just as a personal fear of him had rushed over Charles, so did it now rush over Frank. His brain grew dizzy.

For the notion somehow struck him that the man was not wanting Charles at all. But that he might be an emissary of Blase Pellet's, come here to look after himself.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AT JETTY'S.

JOHN JETTY was the local carpenter. A master in a small way. His workshop was in the village, Grassmere, hard by Eagles' Nest; his dwelling-house was on the common, already told of. In this house he lived with his sister, Esther Jetty; a staid woman, more than ten years older than himself: he being a smart, talkative, active, and very intelligent man of two or three-and-thirty. The house, which they rented of Major Raynor, was larger than they required, and Esther Jetty was in the habit of letting a sitting and bed room in it when she could find a desirable lodger to occupy them.

On the Thursday in Passion Week, when she was in the midst of her house-cleaning for Easter, and in the act of polishing the outside of the spare sitting-room window, in which hung a card with "Lodgings" written on it, she noticed a man in grey clothes; who was sauntering up from the direction of the railway station, an over-coat on his arm, and a good-sized black bag in his hand.

"Some traveller from London," decided Esther Jetty, turning round to gaze at him; for a stranger in the quiet place was quite an event. "Come down here to spend Easter."

The thought had scarcely passed her mind, when, somewhat to her surprise, the stranger turned aside from the path, walked direct towards her, and took off his hat while he spoke.

"Have you lodgings to let?" he asked. "I see a card in your window."

"Yes, sir, I have; two rooms," said she respectfully, for the courtesy of lifting his hat had favourably impressed her, and the tones of his voice were courteous also, not at all like those of an individual in

humble station. "What a fine beard!" she thought to herself. "How smooth, and curly and silky it is!"

"I want to stay in this place for a few days," continued he, "and am looking for lodgings. Perhaps yours would suit me."

Esther Jetty hastened to show the rooms. They were clean, comfortable, and prettily furnished: and the rent was ten shillings per week.

"It's not too much, sir, at this season of the year when the summer's coming on," she hastened to say, lest the amount should be objected to. "I always try to make my lodgers comfortable, and cook for them and wait on them well. The last I had—a sick young woman and her little girl—stayed here all the winter and spring: they only left three weeks ago."

The stranger's answer was to put down a sovereign. "That's the first week's rent in advance," said he. "With the change you can get in a couple of mutton chops for my dinner. I shall not give you much trouble." And he took possession of the rooms at once.

As the days had gone on, only a few as yet, Esther Jetty found that his promise of not giving much trouble was true. She had never had a lodger who gave less. He lived very simply. His dinner generally consisted of two mutton chops; his other food chiefly of eggs and bread-and-butter. It was glorious weather; and he passed nearly all his time out of doors.

Not a nook or corner of the immediate neighbourhood escaped his keen eye, his (as it seemed) insatiable inquisitiveness. He penetrated to the small dwelling houses, good and bad, asking questions of the inmates, making friends with them. He would stand by the half-hour together side by side with the out-door labourers, saying the land wanted this and that done to it, and demanding why it was not done. But, there could be no doubt that he was even more curious in regard to the Raynor family, and especially to its eldest son, than he was as to the land and its labourers: and the latter soon noticed that if by chance Charles Raynor came into sight, the stranger would stroll off, apparently without aim, towards him; and when Charles turned away, as he invariably did, the man followed in his wake at a distance. In short, it would seem that his chief business was to look in a surreptitious way after some of the inmates of Eagles' Nest; and that his visitings of the land and the cottages, and his consequent disparaging remarks thereupon, were probably but taken up to pass away the time. This opinion, however, grew upon people later, not at first.

Easter week passed. On the following Sunday, the stranger went to church, and took up a place whence he had full view of the large square pew belonging to Eagles' Nest. On Easter Sunday he had sat at the back of the church, out of sight. Major Raynor, Charles, Alice, and Frank were in the pew to-day, with the governess and little Kate: Mrs. Raynor was at home with Frank's wife, then lying in her

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dangerous illness. This was two days before they received news of Dr. Raynor's death. Charles was rendered miserably uncomfortable during the service by the presence of the Tiger opposite to him—as might be read by anyone in the secret of his fears, and was read by Frank. Never did Charles raise his eyes but he saw those of the Tiger fixed on him: in fact, the Tiger studied the faces in Major Raynor's pew more attentively than he studied his book.

"He is taking toll of me—that he may know me again: I don't suppose he did know me before, or his work would have been done," thought Charles. "What a precious idiot I was to come to church! Thank heaven, he can't touch me on a Sunday." And when the service was over, the Tiger coolly stood in the churchyard and watched the family pass him, looking keenly at Charles.

That same evening, John Jetty found himself invited to take a pipe with his lodger. They sat in the arbour in the back garden, amid the herbs, the spring cabbages, and the early flowers. Jetty never wanted any inducement to talk. He was not of a wary nature by any means, and did not observe how skilfully and easily the thread of his discourse was this evening turned on the Raynors and their affairs. No man in the place could have supplied more correct information to a stranger than he. He was often at work in the house, was particularly intimate with Lamb, the butler, who had lived with Mrs. Atkinson; as had two or three of the other head servants; and they had the family politics at their fingers' ends. Mrs. Raynor had brought one servant from Spring Lawn; the nurse; the woman knew all about her branch of the family, Frank included, and had no objection to relate news for the new people's benefit, who in their turn repeated it to Jetty. Consequently Jetty was as much at home in the family archives as the Raynors were themselves.

"Is the estate entailed on the Major's son?" questioned the Tiger, in a pause of the conversation.

"I don't think it's strictly entailed on him, sir, but of course he'll have it," was Jetty's answer. "Indeed, it is no secret that the Major has made a will and left it to him. Mrs. Atkinson bequeathed it entirely to the Major: she didn't entail it."

"Who is Mrs. Atkinson?" asked the Tiger.

"Why, that was the possessor of the estate before him," cried Jetty, in an accent full of surprise. To him, familiar with Eagles' Nest and its people for many years, it sounded strange to hear anybody ask who Mrs. Atkinson was. "She was an old lady, sir, sister to the Major, and it all belonged to her. He only came into it last year when she died."

"Had she no sons?"

"No, sir; not any. I never heard that she did have any. Her husband was a banker in London; he bought this place a good many years ago. After his death Mrs. Atkinson quite lived in it."

"Then—it is sure to come to the Major's eldest son?"

"As sure as sure can be," affirmed Jetty, replenishing his pipe at his lodger's invitation. "The Major would not be likely to will it away to anybody else."

"I saw two young men in the pew to-day: one quite young, scarcely out of his teens, I should say; the other some years older. Which of them was the son?"

"Oh, the youngest. The other is a nephew; Mr. Frank Raynor. He is very good-looking, he is: such a pleasant face, with nice blue eyes and bright hair. Not but what Mr. Charles is good-looking, too, in a different way."

"Mr. Charles looks to me like a bit of a puppy," freely commented the Tiger. "And has a haughty air with it: as though he were king of the country and all the rest of us his subjects."

"Well, he is a bit haughty sometimes," acknowledged the carpenter. "Folks have found him so. He is just home from Oxford, sir, and I fancy he has been spending pretty freely there: Lamb just said a word to me. But if you want pleasant speaking and cordial manners, you must go to the nephew, Mr. Frank."

"What is *he* doing here?" dryly asked the stranger, after a pause.

"He is a doctor, sir."

"A doctor? Is he in practice here?"

"Oh, no. He is waiting to set-up in London, and staying down here till he does it."

"What is he waiting for?"

"Well, sir, for money, I guess. The Raynors are open people and don't scruple to talk of things before their servants, so that there's not much but what's known. When the late Mrs. Atkinson died, a good deal of stir arose about some money of hers that could not be found: thousands and thousands of pounds, it was said. It could neither be found, nor the papers relating to it."

"Is it not found?" asked the Tiger, stroking his silky beard.

"Not yet. The Major is anxiously waiting for it: not a day passes, Lamb says, but he is sure to remark that it may turn up the next. Mr. Frank Raynor is to have some of this money to set him up in practice."

"Did Mrs. Atkinson leave no money to him?—He must have been a relation of hers?"

"Oh yes, she left money to him. I forget what it was now—a good sum, though."

"Why does he not set-up with that?" questioned the Tiger wonderingly.

"He has spent it, sir. He and his young wife went abroad, and lived away, I suppose. Any way, the money's gone, Lamb says. But Mr. Frank's as nice a fellow as ever lived."

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"Did he—" began the stranger, and then broke off suddenly, as if in doubt whether or not to put the question: but in a moment went on firmly. "Did he ever live at Trennack in Cornwall?"

"Trennack? Yes, sir, I think that's where he did live. Yes, I'm sure that is the name. He was in practice there with another uncle, one Dr. Raynor, and might have stopped there and come into the practice after him. A rare good opening for him, it's said: but he preferred to come elsewhere."

"Preferred to travel and see the world," spoke the stranger cynically. "Are Major Raynor's revenues good ones?"

"Well, sir, I know in Mrs. Atkinson's time this estate was said to bring in a clear two thousand a year. And Major Raynor had of course an income before he came into it: but that, I hear, is only an annuity and goes from him at his death."

"Then, if his revenues amount to that—from two to three thousand a year—how is it that he does not do the repairs necessary on the estate, and keep up the land, and help to ameliorate the condition of the wretched serfs about him?" demanded the stranger, staring at Jetty.

Jetty shook his head. "I don't think it is the will that's wanted," replied he. "The Major seems to be thoroughly good-hearted: and Lamb says he is one of the easiest masters he could ever wish to serve. No, it is not the will, sir, that is wanting."

"What is it then? The money?"

Jetty nodded his head in the affirmative. "They live at such a rate, you see: and it's said the Major had a lot of back debts to pay when he came here. Altogether, he has nothing to spare."

"Then he ought to have," asserted the Tiger, tapping thoughtfully at his pipe, that lay on the table. "This young Frank Raynor's wife, who is lying ill: had she no money?"

"No, sir. Her family have plenty, I expect, for they live at some grand place down in Cornwall. But she has none. It was a runaway match that she and Mr. Frank made, so she couldn't expect any."

The Tiger nodded his head two or three times, as if in self-commune. "I see," said he: "these Raynors are an improvident set altogether. Thoughtless, cruel, selfish, upstart, and purse-proud. From what little I have noticed during the few days I have been here, and from what I hear you say, that is the impression they make upon me."

He took his pipe off the table as he spoke, knocked the ashes out of it, and put it in its case. An intimation, John Jetty thought, that their social hour was at an end: and he went away, respectfully wishing good evening to his lodger.

Easter was over; and the time for going back to Oxford for the coming term was past. Charles Raynor had not gone to keep it. He had to confess to the Major that he did not care to go back without a good sum of

money, apart from his allowance ; he might have said dared not go. It was not convenient to find the sum : so the Major decided that Charles must miss that one term, and keep the next.

The weeks went on. Charles had in a degree got over his dread of the Tiger—who still remained on in his lodgings—for it was now very evident that if that mysterious man's mission at Grassmere were to take him into custody for debt, it might have been accomplished long ere this. Nevertheless, so strongly do first impressions retain their hold upon us, his dislike of the man continued in all its force. But, as Charles's alarm subsided, Frank's increased. The more evident it became that Charles was not the Tiger's object, the more surely did it seem to him that he, himself, was. It was a fear he could not speak of, but his secret uneasiness was great. Neither he nor Frank could pretend to disguise from themselves that the man's daily business did appear to be that of watching the movements of the Raynor family, especially those of the two young men. Not of watching offensively, but in a quiet, easy, unobtrusive manner. Frank fully believed that the man was a secret emissary of Blase Pellet's, watching that he did not escape.

Major Raynor had never noticed this man : and Frank and Charles, each for his own private and individual reasons, had refrained from speaking of him. Of late the Major had chiefly confined himself to the gardens immediately attached to his house, not going beyond them. There were two reasons for this : the one was, that he had now grown so very stout as to render walking a trouble to him ; the other was, that he never went beyond his inner fence but he was sure to meet one, or other, or more, of those wretched malcontents ; who thought nothing of accosting him and asking him to do this, and to do that. So matters remained pretty stationary : the Major indolently nursing himself in his easy-chair on the lawn ; the young men enjoying their private discomforts ; and the Tiger peering into every conceivable spot open to him, and making himself better acquainted with the general shortcomings of the Raynors, in regard to the estate and the people on it, than they themselves were.

It was Saturday evening. Alice sat at the piano in the drawing-room, singing songs by twilight, to the intense gratification of William Stane, who stood over her. The young barrister frequently ran down home the last day in the week, to remain over the Sunday with his family. As a matter of course, he spent a great deal of the interlude at Eagles' Nest. The Major sat back in the room, dozing ; Charles was listlessly turning over a lot of music. Eagles' Nest had given an afternoon-party that day ; a fashionable kettledrum ; but the guests had departed after the early tea.

"I can scarcely see," said Alice, as her lover placed a new song before her. She was in the dress she had worn at the entertainment : a

black gauze trimmed with white ribbons, with silver bracelets and other ornaments, and looked charmingly lovely. They were in mourning for Dr. Raynor.

"I'll ring for the lights," said Charles. "I can't see."

The speaking had aroused the Major. "We don't want lights yet," said he. "It is pleasanter as it is."

"Sing the songs you know by heart," whispered William Stane "After all, they are the best and sweetest."

Presently Lamb came in of his own accord with the wax lights. The Major, waking up again, made no objection now, but forbade the shutters to be closed.

"It's a pity to shut out that moonlight," said he. Not that the moonlight could have benefited him much, for in another minute he was asleep again. He had grown strangely drowsy of late. So the room was lighted up, and the moonlight streamed in at the window.

Frank entered. He had been sitting upstairs with his wife, who was still very ill. Taking up his position at the window, he listened silently to the song then in progress. Charles came up to him.

"How is she to-night, Frank?"

"No better. If—Look there!" he suddenly exclaimed, his voice sunk to a whisper.

Some one had walked deliberately by, outside the window, gazing at what there might be to see within the room. Was it the Tiger? Frank's heart beat nineteen to the dozen.

"Did you see him, Charley?"

"Who was it?" whispered Charley.

"I'm hardly sure; he passed so quickly. The Tiger, I conclude. Yes, I am sure of it. I know the cut of his head."

"What consummate impudence, to be trespassing here!"

Both of them left the room, made their way to a side door, and looked out. No one was in sight: and yet, whoever had passed must have come that way.

"He has turned back," said Charley: and he advanced cautiously amid the shrubs, that skirted that end of the house, to look round at the front.

No. Not a soul was to be seen or heard. Had he scampered straight across the lawn and made off? It seemed like it.

"I wonder what it's coming to!" cried Charley. "Could we have him warned off the estate, I wonder?"

"Hardly," spoke Frank in a dreamy tone.

"I *cannot* think what he does here," exclaimed Charles. "If he had any evil intentions, he—he would have acted upon them before now."

"You mean as to yourself, Charley. Rely upon it, you are out of the matter altogether."

"Who's in it, then?"

"Myself, perhaps."

The answer was given quietly and easily: but there was something in its tone that kept Charles from regarding it as a jest.

"You are not in debt, are you, Frank?" he cried hastily.

"Not that I know of."

"I declare, for the moment I thought you must be in earnest," said Charles, relieved. "It is uncommonly strange what the fellow can want here?"

Frank said no more. They paced about for some time, without their hats, in the bright moonlight, talking of other matters. In crossing the side path to the house, they met Jetty the carpenter coming away from it, a frail in his hand, out of which a saw was sticking upright. The man had been doing some repairs in-doors.

"Jetty," cried Charles, accosting him, and speaking upon impulse, "who is that man that lodges with you? The fellow with the great brown beard, who goes about in a suit of grey."

"I don't know who he is, sir," replied Jetty. "He is a very quiet lodger and pays regular."

"What is he down here for?"

"Well, I think it is for his health," said Jetty. "He told us he had not been well for some time before he came to Grassmere."

"What is his name?"

"And that I don't know, sir ——"

"Not know his name?" interrupted Charles, impatiently.

"Well, sir, I was going to say that I don't know it from him. He is uncommonly close as to his own affairs: though he likes well enough to hear about other people's. As to his name he did not mention it when he first came in, and my sister said she did not like to ask him. But ——"

"I never heard of such a thing as not knowing a lodger's name," went on Charles, getting excited over it, while Frank stood by in perfect silence. "Does the man get no letters?"

"Yes, sir. But they don't come to the house; they are left at the post office in Grassmere, and he fetches them himself. The other morning, when Esther went into his parlour, he was reading one of these letters, and the cover of it lay on the table, address upwards. She was not quick enough to read the name on it, for he took it up, but she saw it was a short name and began with a G."

"Mr. Grim, no doubt," said Charles.

"'Mr. G——, Post Office, Grassmere.' That was it, sir."

"I must say I should like to know who he is and what he is doing here," concluded Charles. "Good-night, Jetty."

Jetty gave an answering good-night, touched his cap, and went away with rapid strides. Drawing near to his home, he overtook the Tiger, sauntering along with slow steps.



"You are late to-night, Jetty."

"Yes, sir," replied the carpenter, decreasing his pace to that of the speaker. "I had to put some new shelves into one of the kitchen cupboards at Eagles' Nest, and it has taken me longer than I thought for."

"All going on well there?" continued the Tiger.

"First rate," said Jetty. "They had a great party this afternoon; one of those new-fashioned kettledrums. Such an entertainment it was! Such beautiful dresses!"

"I thought the son, Charles Raynor, was keeping his terms at Oxford," resumed the Tiger, after giving himself time to digest the information touching the kettledrum. "Why is he not keeping this one?"

"Well, sir," said Jetty, beginning his answer in his favourite mode, and dropping his voice to a low key, though they were quite alone on the common, "I believe Mr. Charles can't show his face at Oxford until he is better up in funds; so he is omitting this term."

"Debts—eh?" cried the Tiger, but without any appearance of surprise. "And the Major has not the funds to spare?"

"Well, sir, that is to be inferred."

"Meanwhile the lad fills up his days and hours at home with dancing, and smoking, and kettledrums, and other good-for-nothing amusements. *That's* a nice way to spend one's life!"

"Young men will be young men, sir—though they are but lads," spoke Jetty, deprecatingly.

"Yes; young men will be young men: some of them at any rate," came the half-mocking retort. "But in all my days, I never saw a young man who appeared more likely to go straight down to ruin than Charles Raynor."

*(To be continued.)*

## PRINCESS ELEANOR.

## XIII.

FLORENCE, January, 186—.

HOW surprised you will be, Amy, when, running over this letter your eye meets names I had thought to leave behind me at home—Werdan, Arsent. Both have been here for more than a fortnight, and both are here for the sake of your unworthy friend.

My not narrating to you more of the first week I passed in this city, must be solely ascribed to the arrival of these gentlemen, who so persecute us with invitations for picnics and rides into the country, that Ernest has been obliged to assign two days in every week to each of them, on which they may play the *maître des plaisirs*, and do with us what they like. They have brought a young man with them, the son of a friend of my mother's, who also takes part in our amusements. Let me present him to you : Scipione di San Giuliano.

Cousin Dorothy was quite in an ecstasy of joy when the two friends from home paid their first visit. They were scarcely gone when she settled herself comfortably by the fire, and began talking.

"How delightful of them to follow us in this way!" cried she. "It is for you I am especially glad, Eleanor. You will be no longer obliged to look for company to the artist alone, and can talk of things more pleasant and natural to you than that everlasting discourse on art. I do not mean to say that he is not a very nice young man indeed, but he is sorely in need of a final polish. I will see what I can do for him."

If my dear cousin would only be a little more frank, and openly confess that she now hopes to have the young artist all to herself, and that the others will be constantly at my side!

That was my first thought. But after more reflection on the subject, I felt that she was not so very far wrong after all.

That I have accustomed myself to a new tone of conversation, and also to new society, I see by the effort it now costs me to listen to the talk of Werdan and Arsent.

I am no longer ready to answer every clever remark, and even forget to ask for the small chronicles of our town, which must offer some novelties since our departure. So I have come to the conclusion that I have occupied myself more with art than was good for me. Once so far in my reflection, I began to think of an excursion planned for the next day with less reluctance than I had done until then. I went, and

cousin Dorothy came too, drawing after her him she kindly intended "polishing."

But when we were home again I could not help comparing the day at its close with the one I spent with Herr Impach in the Alps. Of course you think that the first did not gain by the comparison.

The young man seems to have felt slighted—I did not speak two words to him all day—for he has asked Ernest if it would please him to have a copy of Titian's Biondo.

This is more than I had intended. I did not mean to give up our walks through the picture galleries, and shall with difficulty spare him. Still, as the chance is offered me, I will try and return to my old ways again.

When I shall have told you in a few words how we passed this evening, then you will be quite au fait.

We had returned from a small theatre, and Ernest asked the gentlemen who accompanied us to come in and take tea with us. The night had been so beautiful and clear that we had walked home; a thing our climate would not admit of in the month of February. But it was cold enough even here to admit of our greatly enjoying the sight of a large fire by which cousin Dorothy sat, making tea and awaiting our return. When Herr Impach entered the room we were all comfortably settled; Arsent with cousin Dorothy on the sofa, Werdan and the young Florentine to my right and left. Herr Impach went and sat down by Ernest near the fire, and quite overlooked the bewitching smile with which cousin Dorothy meant to lure him to her side.

Our conversation soon turned on art treasures, in which Florence is so exceedingly rich. Only a few days ago I should have spoken enthusiastically on that subject: now, to my shame be it confessed, I sought out the only thing that had displeased me.

"In one point I have been sorely disappointed," I exclaimed; "and half my pleasure has been spoilt. It is in Raphael's Fornarina!"

My words were intended to provoke the young artist; if I am not to desert his banner, he must convince me that his cause is perfect and blameless. Fearing that he should misunderstand me, I accompanied my remark by a look in his direction.

The Florentine, San Giuliano, took up the gauntlet, however. He said that I must have forgotten what the word Fornarina means. "'Tis not a princess"—here he bowed low—" 'tis not a princess we look for in Raphael's love: and for a simple baker girl she is well enough. The figure is a little clumsy, the hand large; but we discover nothing vulgar in the face."

After a moment's reflection, I said:

"Not what is comparatively beautiful—no, the best and highest must gain the artist's heart. Why should Raphael have *painted* his Madonna, and *loved* the Fornarina? I can never forgive him for that,

and would rather a thousand times I had not seen the picture in the Tribuna, than have the ideal I had conceived of this genius dimmed by a single shadow."

"Perhaps the girl was the prettiest Raphael had ever seen," Ernest said; "only he painted her as she was, while he idealised the other female heads in his pictures. Of course I only speak en dilettante, and do not presume to give an opinion on the subject."

My brother turned to Herr Impach as he spoke these last words; but the artist did not yet choose to tell us his mind, and allowed Arsent to reply.

"I am of Princess Eleanor's opinion. With her I think that a coarse beauty cannot compete with a refined though less handsome being. The first only delights the eye, the second the mind also, even if we speak of the exterior alone."

"That is a matter of taste," said Werdan. "Le juste milieu is what I like best."

"My compliments to the one who fears to offend either side!" I answered. But as I had made up my mind to force open Herr Impach's mouth, I continued:

"The greatest of his century must have had the choice amongst the loveliest women of his time. Why then should he have chosen a being we cannot call beautiful, and before whose portrait we stand from no other reason than because we are told it is Raphael's Fornarina?"

"It is not Raphael's Fornarina," the young artist at last condescended to say. "No document, not even a tradition, speaks to the fact, whilst a thousand indications point us to the real original."

"And which is that?" we all asked at the same moment.

"The Madonna della Seggiola. We find her head reproduced in ten pictures. 'Tis always the same maiden, who, with loving looks bestowed on the spectator, pleases us so much. All that history and tradition reveal points to the fact that she was indeed the beautiful Trasteverina."

"You believe with me," I asked, "that Raphael never loved the woman commonly called the Fornarina?"

"I am sure of it. A true artist, a genius, who meets the woman of his dreams, must by her be inspired to his best work. Wherever Raphael wished to represent beauty as something sacred, there he painted his Fornara's beloved face. She was all in all to him, as he said to Leo X., who, on asking him why the girl was always at his heels when he painted, received the answer: 'If you take away my Fornarina, you take away my eyes.'"

The artist defended his cause as if he felt that I had attacked him much more than poor, stout Fornarina. Ernest nodded his head approvingly when he had done speaking, and I should have liked to

say something in acquiescence, but Werdan had already involved me in a long story, the end of which San Giuliano scarcely awaited to tell a whole string of anecdotes, from laughing at which the tears came to his eyes.

I was aware of all that passed around me ; saw cousin Dorothy giggling behind her pocket-handkerchief, and heard her ask for every clever thing to be repeated twice. Werdan never ceased talking ; even Arsent sometimes chimed in ; and I—Amy, I scarcely succeeded in giving my face an attentive expression. The first part of the conversation had interested me deeply, and now I was so bored that I felt the greatest desire in the world to gather up the train of my dress, and sit down on the low stool between my brother and Herr Impach. There I should have heard more of the history of Raphael Sanzio and his beautiful Fornarina.

But I was obliged to remain the whole evening in the society I had thought worthy of preference, and felt severely punished for my mischievousness in challenging the artist.

Perhaps this is only the transition to old habits and the old tone of conversation. At any rate, I will persevere in trying to get back to it again.

Cousin Dorothy told me, with a deep sigh, that she gave the young artist up as incorrigible. Dear, good cousin ! It would require a stronger persuasive power than yours to win this young man from his all-absorbing thoughts—from his art !

From what lofty heights he looks down upon us, when our jeunesse dorée are chattering away about all the nonsense that enters their heads ! But that is very wrong and presuming of him, for no one has a right to despise what he could not succeed in doing ; and I really do not believe that he could talk a whole evening about nothing at all, as Werdan can.

Do you know he is very proud too, Amy ? As we parted on the stairs he made a bow to me lower than any ever made by our dancing-master ; and he did not even look at me once the whole time.

To-morrow I shall ask Ernest to take me through Pitti Palace ; I must look at the real Fornarina again. Besides, I am curious to see how far advanced Herr Impach is with his picture.

Good night, Amy ! I am so tired that the pen drops from my hand.

YOUR ELEANOR.

#### XIV.

COUNT WERDAN TO HIS UNCLE.

FLORENCE.

I have been here for more than three weeks, according to your wish, dear uncle ; and I suppose you have expected a letter from me long ere this.

I was greatly astonished to find Arsent here before me. He persecutes Eleanor in the most absurd manner, and what is worse, evidently with the approval of Ernest. Very little I care, however, for notwithstanding his enormous fortune, he is in every respect my inferior, and it amuses me greatly to let him appear as such on every possible occasion. His conversation about horses and stables makes Eleanor so nervous that she turns shudderingly from him to me. A part of this I owe to the dauber Impach, who with his romantic talk about art has quite upset her. Serves that stupid Arsent right ! Why does he sneak after Eleanor in this way, without giving me notice of his intentions by one single word ?

But when I called Impach "dauber," I did him wrong, upon my word ! He certainly is the cleverest fellow at copying ancient pictures that I ever saw in my life. Of course I have not your eye, dear uncle, in questions of art, but I must confess that I could not distinguish from the original a copy he made of a Titian. I will just tell you, dear uncle, what idea struck me when I saw that excellent picture ! Supposing you were not quite so determined upon having the original, how delighted you might be with an Impach copy of your beloved Rembrandt—a copy which would be by everyone mistaken for the original ! If you would so content yourself, then I should have succeeded in all—for Eleanor I look upon as entirely mine. She certainly flirts a little with Arsent, and even with the painter, but that is only to test my love. Besides, I am without a rival, for she cannot bear Arsent, and of the artist there can be no question. I should risk the decisive words any day if it were not for the Prince, with his resolve to make Eleanor marry a rich man. These difficulties can, however, be completely put aside by my dear good uncle.

That idea of a copy of the Rembrandt does not in the least affect the diplomacy with which I still hope to obtain the original. Should I fail, however, I cannot believe that you, dear uncle, would be cruel enough to stand in my way, when I am about to become the happiest of mortals.

Be content for to-day with this short, unstudied letter. You know that I always managed my gun better than my pen.

Your dutiful Nephew,  
OSCAR.

# XV.

FLORENCE.

I took up my pen, Geoffrey, to fill your ear with lamentations over my misery ; but I remember in time that I have no right to do so, as it is all my own fault.

But just in contrast with the happy day I reported in my last, I will describe our present evenings ; and before all, the one from which I date all my wretchedness.

When theatres and parties are over, we pass the second half of the



evening en famille, that is to say, with Count Werdan, Arsent, and a young Florentine, brought here expressly, I doubt not, to set Werdan off. It is the Prince who excludes everyone else, in the hope, I imagine, of seeing his sister decide in favour of young Arsent. From him I had as yet nothing to fear, for he looked as innocent and foolish as possible.

It was Werdan I thought dangerous. Well, one evening they all began talking of ghosts and spirits. The Florentine told us that a few days ago Veronica Cibo had again been seen in the vaults of Villa Salviati.

"Explain your meaning," cried Werdan. "If this Veronica Cibo is the owner of Villa Salviati, I see nothing extraordinary in her visiting the cellars of her house. I am quite ready even to keep her company, if her wine be better than her renommée."

For a few moments the Florentine enjoyed the delight in silence of being in possession of a story about which even the brilliant Werdan knew nothing. At last he began :

"Veronica Cibo was the wife of Gino Salviati. No longer so beautiful as she had once been ——"

"*When* was she no longer as beautiful as she had once been?" interrupted Werdan.

This call to logic remained unheeded by the Florentine. Undisturbed he continued :

"Veronica Cibo one day found out that her husband was faithless to her, and all for a little beauty belonging to the lower classes. She took her resolve, and one night entered the happy one's bedchamber by the window, found her sleeping, and in a moment cut her beautiful head off, which she carried away with her in a cloth. Next morning—it was her husband's birthday—she brought him an elegant basket, the contents of which were concealed with flowers and veils. Gino Salviati looked gratefully at her, and raised the lid, beneath which he discovered his murdered love's pale face, surrounded by a crown of golden hair. He took his wife to the Villa Salviati, where she is said not to have died, but to be still wandering about, much to the dismay of the servants and country-folks."

"Your statement," remarked Werdan, "leaves nothing to be desired in the way of precision and brevity. Whether it could not have been told in a more interesting and poetic manner, I leave others to decide. Now I should have told it thus :—In times when ——"

"Pray why did you not tell the story at once?" interrupted the Florentine.

"Because I did not know it, and that is simply owing to my not having had the pleasure of being born in Tuscany, the land of terrible traditions. Still I am certain that I should have obtained a greater success had I told the story."

"I should have left the whole thing unsaid," Arsent here interposed. "Did none of you remark the shudders it has cost Princess Eleanor?"

"All romantic ladies love horrible stories!" said Werdan, in his own defence.

"Who says that my sister is romantic?" asked the Prince.

"Princess Eleanor started the subject of esprits," answered Werdan.

"No! I did that," the Florentine protested.

"Did you, really?" Arsent asked with a meaning smile.

Werdan could not resist explaining that smile. He said: "You forget, Arsent, that our friend was speaking of esprits in the plural, and not in the singular."

"I find that I am being discussed as if I were not present," Eleanor now said. "If I did not really believe, my dear Werdan, that you would add all manner of nonsense to the story in question, I should make you tell it, even at the cost of ever so many shudders, which Arsent is generous enough to wish to spare me."

The gentlemen now outdid each other in telling Eleanor all the sweet things that came into their heads. How rude I must seem to her—I, who never have even dared to tell her how beautiful she is! And this Werdan, who cannot love her as I do, always succeeds in choosing the very words I wished to say! A hundred more subjects our conversation touched upon, passing superficially over everything, and scarce stopping for a moment on topics of the utmost importance. Still the ghost story found its echo now and then—as some melody in an opera, which returns ever and anon without exciting attention, yet sings in our ears for a long time afterwards.

Eleanor seemed to feel this; for when we took leave she said to us, with a graceful movement of fear:

"I really think your friend, San Giuliano, has bewitched me with his ghost story. I shall not be able to go to sleep without taking Veronica Cibo into my dreams."

"Oh, might I make it the aim of my life to protect you from every dark thought!" Werdan whispered, just loud enough for me to hear. With a look of love in his eyes he kissed her hand as—I alone have a right to kiss it.

But it came worse and worse, and from another quarter.

It was the very next evening. We were all sitting round the tea-table, when Werdan got up, and went to the piano to play a brilliant waltz.

When he had finished, Eleanor begged him to play something serious, upon which he came back to the table, and advised Eleanor to engage Arsent for that purpose, as it was much more in his way.

Eleanor asked Arsent if he really played, and the latter timidly answering, "A little," she begged him to please her by going to the

piano. Prince Ernest frowned. I suppose he did not like his protégé to make himself ridiculous, but he could no longer prevent it.

Arsent sat down stiffly, and began playing one of those tiresome tunes which one hears little children practising for hours together, and thereby driving their relatives and neighbours to despair. A fiend's delight shone from Werdan's eyes as he listened; Prince Ernest's frown grew darker every moment; cousin Dorothy drew out her handkerchief to hide her laughter; and even Eleanor scarcely suppressed a smile.

I listened with surprise to the primitive sounds with which this Prince thought of wooing his heart's love. As I listened, the tones went from octave to octave, the air was no longer distinguishable: as a stream, whose distant murmurings we at first hear indistinctly, but whose rushing noise, as we draw near, almost deafens us—so melody followed melody; the young man's bearing grew into inspiration, and ere ten minutes had elapsed we were all listening to the performance of the most perfect artist. Geoffrey! how shall I describe the change in the expression of the listeners? Werdan's mouth opened in astonishment, his face grew longer every minute; the frown on the Prince's face died away, and his eyes lighted up with pleasure; the affected old cousin rocked her head to and fro like the pendulum of a clock; Eleanor—what do you think Eleanor did? With the soft approach of spring coming to awake its flowers into new life, she glided to the piano, and sat down on a low stool beside it. She then closed her eyes, and with folded hands listened in silent ecstasy to the beautiful sounds. When Arsent began, even I could scarce refrain from laughing; now we found no words to thank him.

Prince Ernest pressed his hands as if in congratulation. Eleanor thanked him joyfully, wishing *him* a good night, *herself* another evening like the one he had just procured her.

This morning the inspection of my copy from Titian took place. Our merry company hurried up the broad staircase of the Uffizii, then along the passage on the walls of which is one of the most interesting collection of Italian men of renown. We threw scarcely a glance into the Tribuna, but went over to the secret passage leading across the Arno to the Pitti Palace.

As we entered the apartments Eleanor threw a friendly glance upon the Caritas group, then we stopped a moment before Fra Bartolomeo's Laying Christ in the Grave, and lastly paused with Prince Ernest before Allori's Judith. We had now reached the window where my Biondo was standing near the original, awaiting the finishing touches. You remember, Geoffrey, how minutely we studied every detail in the master's manner, and will not be surprised if I tell you that none of them had ever seen or expected so good a copy. Prince Ernest gratified me much by saying, "Truly an exquisite talent!"

Arsent hoped that I would some day work for him, and Werdan began reflecting, and stood silent for five minutes ; a thing I had never seen him do before.

Eleanor was the only unsatisfied one. "Why do you waste your time in taking copies?" she whispered. Was not that the highest praise of all, Geoffrey? She seemed to claim a sort of right to me, to my talent. And yet —

After a quarter of an hour's contemplation they all turned to go, intending to examine the Madonna della Seggiola on their way.

Eleanor's large blue eyes were turned up to the beautiful picture. The others had moved away : I alone stood by her side, anxious to hear what she would say, now she knew that this was the Fornarina. Her eyelids closed ; then she spoke in a whisper.

"I cannot understand the expression in the Madonna's face, if it be not that of a mother's love. Was the Fornarina a mother?"

My innocent darling spoke this so naturally I could have kissed the hem of her garment, as a devotee kisses that of his special saint. Surely it was no business of mine to explain that that tender look of love was intended for Raphael, and not for the child.

When Prince Ernest called us I excused myself, saying I had still my copy to finish. As she gave me her hand, a slight shadow crossed her brow, and she said :

"That copy is an excuse for staying away from us!"

Had it only been possible, how willingly should I have left my picture to its fate! I was greatly astonished to see Werdan remain behind with me, and sit down on a chair near my easel.

"I should like to watch you at work," were the words with which he explained this extraordinary proceeding.

Except once before, at home, he has never honoured me by taking any notice of me. I am a plebeian dauber to him, nothing else. I therefore suspected he had some special reason for spending a whole hour patiently at my side.

He wished to know if I copied Titian alone, or other old masters besides. When I told him that not Titian but Rembrandt was my cheval de bataille, he started up and flung his arms round my neck in so violent a manner as to frighten two English ladies into dropping their opera-glasses to the ground. He then burst forth :

"You must forgive my enthusiasm! I cannot help it, cannot conceal my joy, when I meet genuine talent! You shall see what a patron of the arts I will become from the moment my uncle's fortune passes into my possession." Since then he is continually at my side. Did I not know how very small his chances are with Eleanor, I should feel unhappy when listening to his conceited talk. He is so sure of obtaining her that even I should believe him, did I not feel daily more assured of her indifference to him. Arsent on the contrary daily makes

some progress in her esteem, and I cannot help thinking this natural, when I consider his firm character, his modesty, and his incomparable talent for music. He is just the sort of man who will lie at Eleanor's feet all his life, happy if he only obtain a look from her soft blue eyes.

I have much more to say, but as everything in this world must have an end, so must this letter at last be closed. Farewell, and do not forget

Your friend WALTER.

## XVI.

From Home.

Dearest Amy,—How surprised you will be to recognise your friend's handwriting, with the post-mark of Berlin! Yes, we are back again, and if I am to confess all, much to my delight. I cannot help being much happier at home, be it ever so beautiful in other countries. Snow and ice have their own charms, and I missed them dreadfully in Florence.

Ernest's business was over, and as he could not well give a written report of it, he was called back by telegraph.

I am heartily glad to be rid of my two obtrusive admirers; only I fear they will not long shine by their absence, for they had nothing on earth to do in Florence but sit in our rooms, and persuade us to walk and ride out with them.

The artist has returned with us, but our journey home resembled the going as little as I resemble the Eleanor of those times. Yes, Amy, if you could suddenly come upon your gay friend of former days, I doubt if you would recognise her. I am wearied by contending feelings, and although I am not unhappy (I have no reason to be so), still I cannot enjoy one hour's rest. On our journey home Ernest had a long conversation with me, in which he made me understand that it would be his earnest desire to see me accept Arsent. I gave him innumerable reasons for not doing so; but they can have been of very little weight, for Ernest shook his head doubtfully when I had done. What can I say? Arsent has a good heart and high principles; he has a wonderful talent for music; his outward appearance is agreeable, and his love for me more than I deserve. I say all this to myself, and yet I always come to this conclusion: The man with whom I go to the altar must inspire me with something very different from what I feel for Arsent! Tell me, Amy, where have I gained these romantic fancies? There never were any temperaments of this sort in our family, and I have surely not learnt them from you, who never admired anything in the world but Ernest's noble mind and character.

Amy, what I should like to know above all things is whether the Fornarina was thinking of Raphael while sitting for that beautiful picture. If such were the case, I should no longer have a doubt as to not marrying Arsent. To look like that and think of him would be

altogether an impossibility. Fancy my misery when I tell you that I cannot bring myself to ask Ernest this question, and yet I used to tell him all that puzzled me. But now he would explain to me that the Fornarina had no family to take into consideration, and that it entirely depended upon me to turn Arsent into my Raphael! Oh, if I only had but one good reason against it! "My kingdom for a reason!" I should like to exclaim. If I could say that I prefer Werdan to Arsent, I believe Ernest would send them both away, but there would not be a word of truth in that assertion.

Ernest spoke kindly, but seriously. He told me that I had no right to reject a man, in every respect eligible, for a mere fancy, and that he would leave me a month's time to consider. Well, I *am* considering, and getting quite gloomy about it. I scarcely brighten up during the drawing lessons which, for two hours every day, Herr Impach gives me. I draw from the photographs we brought with us from Italy, and I cannot help sighing sometimes, as the sight of them brings back the recollection of the happiest days of my life, when art alone filled every hour with the purest delight. Herr Impach seems to feel something similar to this. When I laid on the table the album we had chosen together, I wished to remind him of times past and gone, and thank him for all he had contributed to render them so happy. As I looked up and opened my lips to speak, I met his eyes, and the expression in them showed that he too remembered. We could neither of us have said more than that look implied, so I only bent down my head, and gave him my hand across the album.

*He*, I feel sure, would find me some good reason against a marriage with Arsent, if I dared to ask him. But I do not think that Ernest would approve my consulting him on so important a matter.

Cannot you help me with advice, my clever little Amy?

The drawing lessons are not the only hours Herr Impach spends in our house. He sits in the gallery the whole morning, copying I know not which of our pictures. I am not allowed to visit him there, because the large rooms cannot be properly heated, and cousin Dorothy caught cold the first time she went there this winter, so that she watches me anxiously, and will not allow me to put my foot into that part of the house. I do not much care, for it always makes me angry to see Herr Impach copy paintings when he could put his talent to far higher aims.

I have not one pleasant thing to tell you in this letter—everything is disagreeable. Ernest is going away for a few weeks. When he returns, he expects my decision to be given. I know that I shall have got no further than to-day, as my mind is made up already.

Snowdrop is my only comfort in all this. I nurse the flowers that urround it; and when I begin to feel unhappy, I sit down opposite to it for some time. I am sure to derive some consolation from it; and



always get up with the hope that this shadow will pass from my life, and that happy days may still be in store for me.

Before Ernest leaves, cousin Dorothy intends asking him if we may have Herr Impach ("her Raphael," she calls him) here to dinner sometimes. Should Ernest consent, I may reckon upon the young man's spending his whole life with us, for it is one of Dorothy's prominent qualities to abuse of a given permission. Not even his natural obstinacy will enable him to refuse my cousin's importunate invitations.

I am not happy, Amy, very far indeed from happy! May better days follow these dreary ones!

Send a word of consolation to

Your ELEANOR.

XVII.

Geoffrey! All is over! The fathomless deep, towards which I was blindly hurrying, has opened, and engulfed me.

Dearly must I pay for the happiness I enjoyed but so short a time—with more than life, Geoffrey—for it has cost me *name* and *honour*!

I never cease to repeat to myself how guilty I have been; and yet I scarcely find strength enough to support my misery. Untrue to all the principles of my life, I disgraced myself by becoming the humble servant of a lady of rank, who can repay the sacrifice of my life and honour by nothing more than a kind look. And besides! have I not been a traitor to friendship, to the true brother that you are, all through this fatal love of mine; for the thought of going the short way from Florence to Rome, for the sake of seeing you, never entered my mind. I shuddered at the mere idea of leaving Eleanor for a day. Surely such madness could lead to no good! This chastisement I had, however, not expected.

Listen to the means by which your friend thought to obtain mercy, and was condemned to destruction.

We had scarcely returned home safely, when Prince Ernest once more left, this time alone, while he promised to return in a fortnight. To old cousin Dorothy I owed a daily invitation to dinner. The drawing-lessons were quietly taking their course, and Prince Ernest had requested me to copy a Titian in his gallery, the original of which he desired to have in his study as soon as the gap could be filled by a copy. I asked his permission to copy it twice, as I wished it for myself also. "The whole gallery is of course at your disposal!" was his amiable answer. I was working hard when Werdan one day begged me to take a ride in the Park with him, as he had something important to communicate to me.

He then asked me to make a copy of Rembrandt's Old Woman,

for his uncle, whom he had persuaded to give up all hope of ever obtaining the original.

"That you will use all the talent in your power," he concluded, "I know, when I tell you that my whole life's happiness depends upon the old gentleman's being pleased with it."

I should have liked to refuse, but to my misfortune I suddenly recollected Eleanor's words: "If the old Baron would be content with a copy, we should be only too glad to let him have one."

Eleanor's slightest wish is to me a command. I assented.

Werdan gratefully pressed my hand, promising me a reward equal to the service rendered.

Before we returned home, and after we had spoken of a hundred other subjects, he said, *en passant*:

"Pray do not mention the matter to the Waldemberts or to any person living. You must give me your word upon that. I will trust your word of honour as implicitly as if it were the word of a nobleman!"

Geoffrey, my friend! never in all your life allow such speeches to beguile your good sense. I have paid dearly for the impatient nod of the head with which I gave the word he half doubted.

It was not difficult to keep the copy secret, for the Prince was absent, and Eleanor was not allowed to come into the gallery.

A month ago I gave my work to the Count; that is to say, he carried it away in my absence, pretending that that was much the safer plan.

What must the Prince think of me, when he remembers how, to agreeably surprise him, I placed the copy of the Titian in the gallery, and the original in his own study?

Too painful is this thought, and I cannot dwell upon it, even if the sufferings awakened by the thought of Eleanor did not consume me. What can I be in her eyes?

But let me tell you the catastrophe, for such the scene was, which closed the happy dream your friend dreamed in the palace of the Waldemberts.

Eleanor and I were sitting in the small conservatory, drawing—that is to say, we were resting at the moment, and eating preserved fruit from a vase she held on her knee. The servant entered and summoned her to the drawing-room. She made the slightest pout, and hurried out of the conservatory. Five minutes later, I too was called, and on entering, found Eleanor talking to a gentleman with an imposing figure, and eyes from which shone the highest gifts of the mind. No wonder that I had instantly admired him; on being presented, I heard the name of the nobleman who is at the same time the Horace and Mæcenas of poetry and painting. He is Eleanor's godfather, and has just returned home from a long Oriental expedition. All the intimate friends were invited to do him honour, and I of course was numbered

amongst them. After dinner the whole company went into the conservatory to take coffee and admire Eleanor's drawings, and from thence into the gallery. The able connoisseur stood still before all the pictures that formerly had been his favourites, and thus it took some time before we reached the round room, where the chefs d'œuvre are hung. Werdan went with Eleanor into the recess of a window. I followed them from jealousy, and also because I could not stand listening to the Prince's praises of my last copy. They began discussing as to whether it was appropriate to rob the collection of the originals. I heard nothing more from the moment Eleanor turned from Werdan, and received me with a smile, until I was startled by the visitor's exclamation :

"I have been looking for more than five minutes for your Rembrandt, Waldemberg, and am curious to hear what better place you could have assigned to it."

"What do you mean?" asked the Prince. Then as he approached the picture, both exclaimed together: "A copy, by heaven!"

I moved nearer. Geoffrey, imagine my horror, if you can. It was my copy! I stood, as if the world around me had suddenly disappeared—Eleanor with it! My blood rushed to the heart, and I could do nothing but stretch out my hand towards the picture to know if all were reality or delusion.

"What do you think of this?" the Prince asked, without turning towards me. I felt all the while that Eleanor's gaze was intently fixed upon me.

"It is certainly—not the—original!" I gasped forth, whilst cold perspiration covered my forehead.

The strange tone of my voice caused the two men at my side to turn round simultaneously.

Prince Ernest's eyes, after a short look of surprise, took an expression of profound sadness. Believe me, Geoffrey, no Virgil, no Dante, has ever described such tortures as I suffered in those moments. Time for me had ceased to be; every second was an age; the whole quarter of an hour but one moment. I would renounce happiness for ever rather than again suffer those torments.

"Do you know anything of the fraud committed?" asked Prince Ernest in icy tones. Eleanor stood opposite me, her body bent forward, her eyes wildly staring.

My look wandered round the circle in whose centre I stood. When it met Werdan's face, I knew all. The closed lids, the expressionless features, said more plainly than human speech could have done: "Remember your word!"

Geoffrey, I, an honourable and free man, was to take this ignominy upon myself, was to keep my word: only to show that it was as good as that rascal's—as good as a nobleman's! What irony! I

struggled—I suffered in those moments, Geoffrey, more than words can tell.

On one side stood Eleanor, my fame, my honour, my name, which I must not allow to be trampled in the dust before *her*—the dreadful fact of being suspected by a man like Prince Ernest—my whole career—all the hope of future happiness. On the other side, naught but the slight nod with which I had given my word!

But all was forgotten before the single thought which grew like a falling avalanche, thundering into my ear: “On this side stands your duty! Be true to your pledged word!”

It was victorious. With my eyes looking frankly into the Prince’s—he may have thought this an excess of impudence—with a voice scarcely tremulous, and a proud movement of my hand, as I pointed to the dreadful picture, I said:

“The copy is done by me, Prince, but how it came here I know not.”

“You confess having made this copy,” the Prince exclaimed in anger, “and will not tell the rest! I will have you arrested, if you do not instantly make a full confession.”

“I am quite at your disposal.”

Eleanor now slowly approached the Prince; she threw a look of horror upon my face, then prayed her brother with uplifted hands to put an end to the painful scene.

“For you I will do it!” he exclaimed. Then, turning to me, he added:

“You leave this house instantly. What more I have to say to you, you must hear by letter. Come, Werdan!”

I saw him take that rascal’s arm; saw him motioning to Eleanor to take her godfather’s. As I stood on the threshold of the room, I could not help turning round and sending Eleanor one long look, to assert my innocence to her at least. She received it with wondering eyes, turned pale, and ere the strong man at her side could catch her, fell insensible to the ground.

I had made the first step towards her, but the Prince’s words, as he bent over her, “*All* the fault of that villain,” drove me away.

Since yesterday, when all this happened, I have heard nothing of either Eleanor or Prince Ernest.

Is it not natural, Geoffrey, if I begin to think that my good genius has extinguished his torch, and that power over me is given to the bad spirits of the deep?

I went twice to Werdan’s house yesterday, to demand back my word. Both times the answer was, “Not at home.” This morning, as the servant opened his mouth to say the same thing again, I pushed him aside and entered the nearest room.

Werdan was lying on the sofa, a cigarette in his mouth, a morning paper in his hands. On my entrance he looked up, and before I could utter a word, he said :

"Oh, you delightful fellow ! You have behaved beautifully, upon my word. Your point d'honneur is beyond all doubt now. Come to my arms, and let us be brothers !"

Geoffrey ! I tore the paper from his hands—for he was half-covering his face with it—and claimed back my word in the briefest way possible ; telling him that I required it to clear myself before those who thought themselves vilely betrayed.

"And if I do not give you back that word of yours ?" he asked in a careless tone. I read his anxiety in his look, however. He wished to find out if my silence were safe before he dared refuse.

With more than human force I mastered my rage, and walked up to him. He had risen by this time. With both eyes fixed on his, I said, slowly accentuating every word :

"You have no right to say *if* you did not give it back. My folly, in rashly giving my word, I atoned for in yesterday's dreadful hour. *You* must now do all you can to justify me. How you will manage that is your own business. You have robbed me of the esteem of those I cared for most in all the world ; you have stained my name, so as to ruin me perhaps for a lifetime. You cannot intend to be so vile as to continue your shameless game with me ! My fame, my name, my honour, perhaps my life, are at stake."

"Do not so excite yourself, my dear fellow, and listen in your turn. I have given my uncle that picture, saying I had bought it. On the day he received it, he made a will in my favour, and has registered the same. By it I am his only heir, heir to all his property and titles. If the good old man hears but a word of this whole affair, I am ruined. Not only will he disinherit me, but he will also stop the generous allowance upon which I have for years chiefly existed. You see that *my* life, *my* honour, *my* name, are also at stake. Now I ask you, will the world be most sorry if Walter Impach be lost to it, or if it miss, for ever, Oscar Count Werdan ? Should you refuse to see where the advantage lies, I will speak yet more plainly, and open your eyes to necessity. I have the right wholly on my side, by having been careful enough to demand your word of honour, in case of such an emergency as has now happened. Why on earth this stupid godfather came back from the Kaffirs in Africa just now, I really cannot tell. And why you confessed that the copy was from your hand, you will be best able to explain."

I stood speechless with astonishment at his impudence, and felt my rage getting the better of me. He walked to the window, looked out of it for a few moments, drummed on the panes with his fingers, and looking back towards me at last, continued :

"If my arguments have not yet persuaded you, I will speak the word to which you cannot close your ear. You have always shown true devotion to Princess Eleanor. You can now show that that devotion is strong enough to induce you to make a sacrifice. If you rob me of honour and fortune, you rob her of a husband. To become that, I have firmly resolved. Keep your word for Eleanor's sake; and besides, you must not forget that I intend paying you well. I will warrant that you shall never hear of Prince Ernest again, and will recompense you in a royal manner—make you rich for life. I intend making over to you my mother's fortune, amounting to about 300,000 thalers."

As he said this, victory flashed from his eyes.

Geoffrey, I mastered myself no longer. Whose patience, I ask you, would have resisted so long? I could despise him for everything else; but for this I must punish him in another manner.

"To all your sophism, Count, I have but one answer. It is the question: Will you give me back my word, or not?"

"I should be a precious fool to do so!" was the insolent answer.

"Then you are a villain!"

"Say one word more," he exclaimed, in a rage, "and I will have you turned out by my servants!"

He stretched out his hand for the bell-rope, but I stood before him with my hand raised over him.

"One movement, scoundrel, and I knock you down. You have forfeited your right as a gentleman, but in my fearful position I can do but one thing. I quit this house to send you my seconds."

"Do you believe that I think a man of your sort good enough to fight with?"

"You will have to, if you do not wish me to horsewhip you in the public streets."

These words, uttered with a voice trembling with rage, had their effect.

"You shall pay for that with your life!" he muttered, pale as death. "I will expect your witnesses this very day."

I went away to take the necessary steps for the arrangement of a meeting for life or death.

If I fall, Geoffrey, my friend, then you must hurry to this place, and justify me with Eleanor. I will deposit my will, and a last word to her, in safe hands.

You will hear from me either very soon or never again.

Your friend, WALTER.

*(To be concluded.)*



## THE MOTHER OF LORD MACAULAY.

THERE is one point of similarity in the biographies of many great men, and this is, that their mothers have been women of marked character. Those fortunate daughters of Eve who have been privileged to give to the world its grand thinkers and its grand workers seem often to have been of a somewhat different pattern from the rest of their sex.

John Wesley's mother was a woman of strong intellectual power, who would frequently gather round her the poor of the parish and read and expound to them the Scriptures. What lamps of calm thought were the eyes of Jeanne D'Albert—those eyes which rested on her boy, the future hero of Jarnac, the great Henry that was to be ! What clouds of tender light, what streams of melody, surround the image of Schiller's mother !

And yet these mothers of great men have not been the women who have written the name of their sex in the temple of fame. The son of Madame D'Arblay, in spite of all the proud hopes on which his cradle was founded, in spite of the ambitious desires which were fondly breathed round his childhood, seems to have turned out a very ordinary young man indeed. No boy of Felicia Hemans (what though her soul did make for him such sweet music as—

"The rose from the garden has passed away,  
Yet happy, fair boy, is thy natal day,")

inherited, as far as we know, a spark of her genius. No child of Mrs. Siddons ever melted an audience as Romeo or thrilled it as Hamlet.

It appears, then, that those women to whom has fallen the high destiny of watching over the first buds of young genius are, if we may use the expression, of a peculiar sisterhood. They have bright intellects, but no longing to make them shine further than gleams the blaze of the domestic hearth. They have many graces, but these are more suited to glide softly through the home circle than to walk with stately dignity through public assemblies. They have hearts—not the hearts of a St. Teresa or a Florence Nightingale, into which thousands of the weak and weary may creep and find rest—but hearts the whole joy of which it is to feel a few chosen dear ones nestling in their soft warm shelter.

The mother of Lord Macaulay seems to have been peculiarly a woman of this sweet, rare type. She wrote no books, and yet she had a mind which followed year by year the swift ascent of her great son's spirit. She was no drawing-room Queen, and yet she kept her husband

throughout her life her lover. She founded no hospital or orphanage, but she built up a home.

Selina Mills was the daughter of a Bristol bookseller, whose wealth and position doubtless prevented the shadow of the shop from falling much on his child's thoughts and ideas. We know what a nursery of that day was like. Let our little gentlemen and ladies glance at the picture, and be thankful for the century in which their lot has fallen.

On yonder shelf there are two or at the most three story books, in which not a single coloured print lights up the dingy black and white of the letterpress. There is small chance of the volumes ever being added to; and so, if the little folks ever read at all, they must go through and through the same till they know them better than the namse of their uncles and aunts and cousins. What is that in the corner? Is it a doll that walks and talks, or a baby railway that can run round the room in the twentieth part of a second? No; it is a great lumbering wooden horse, into whose unsympathetic head and tail fancy with her airiest spells can scarcely put motion. In that cupboard there is an inexorable physic bottle, a portion of which must without fail be taken by every inhabitant of the nursery at least once a week; there is not the faintest hope of a kind Providence stepping in in the shape of the family doctor, and ordering the little dear instead a glass of claret. Scattered about are various strange, uncomfortable-looking objects, long stiff poles, and wooden collars, and boards of mysterious shape. These articles are all supposed to help in some way in the development of the luckless youthful female form. By-and-by in comes mamma with two or three lady friends. Surely there will be some fun now, and the eyes of the little ones will begin to sparkle. But no; there is only a good deal of curtseying and polite speech-making, a little preaching on one side, and a little subdued crying on the other. Then the ladies rustle out again in their stiff flowery silks, leaving the room a trifle more chilly than when they entered it. Truly, as we turn away our eyes from this picture we, with our modern ideas, are inclined to wonder that the very babies did not become men and women at once, and very dull men and women too.

From such a nursery, however, Selina Mills came forth at length with much brightness and spirit left in her, as her after story proves. She was now fortunate enough to drift into a very favoured region for a girl in her teens. She went to the school kept by the two Miss More's, Hannah and Patty. Who that has dwelt on the story of the literary women of England does not know the figures of those two sisters! How plainly can we see the slight, upright little figure, primly but always becomingly dressed; the animated face with the still delicate features, though the meridian of life is almost past; the clear eyes full of shrewd intelligence. How distinctly too we can hear her voice: for this clever lady, in spite of the words of King Solomon concerning

the virtue of silence in women, by no means belongs to a silent sisterhood. Her conversation may be somewhat too epigrammatic, but it is never vapid or empty. It is discursive, but never visionary or fanciful. It is a trifle prosy, it is true, at times, but then it is prosy from the mere fact of its having more in it than most mental digestions can bear at once.

When we have thus looked at and listened to the celebrated sister, our eyes easily find their way to her, who, as long as her warm, unselfish heart beat in this world, was never far from Hannah's side. What hearty, happy, self-forgetful admiration there is in Patty's glances as they turn towards her more gifted sister! What thorough good temper puts harmony into her irregular features! How does she brim over with sentiment which may at times be silly, but is never anything save kindly! In woman's history there are few prettier and more touching pictures than that of the united lives of these two sisters. Both, probably, in earlier days had known a stronger but a less peaceful affection. One of Hannah's lovers was, we know, so deeply attached to her, that though he could never get the happy Yes from her lips, he left her when he died his whole fortune: and we always believe that the feeling with which Hannah herself regarded Garrick had in it a touch of hopeless passion. But long after such fires as these had died out, that calm ray of sisterly love shone on for those two women: shone till it mingled with a better light above.

But to return to Selina: she had not been long at the Miss Mores' school before they found out that there was more in her than in most of their pupils, and both sisters began, like kindly fairies, to weave their spells around the girl, working gently upon her. Hannah opened to her the world of books, and what a wonder world that was for the girl's clear, impressionable mind. There were all the gracious band of Shakespeare's women to be made acquaintance with in turn. There were the lighter poets to make new music for her inexperienced ear. There was the first calm ecstatic joy of rising heavenward borne on the wings of Milton's spirit.

Patty, for her part, helped to develop—perhaps almost without knowing it herself—the girl's heart: for who could have watched Patty in the unconscious self-forgetfulness of her daily life without having good quietly instilled into them, as mild showers permeate and make beautiful the earth? No doubt, in after years, when, as wife and mother, storms shook her home, as storms do and will at times shake us all, Selina dwelt upon the memory of this old friend of her childhood, and was refreshed and strengthened thereby.

But the best treasure of all that Selina gained at her school was a living and steadfast religious faith. However insufferably dull and priggish Cœlebs may appear to the modern mind (and we must confess ourselves that, had we been in the fair Lucilla's place, we should have

entertained considerable fears of dying some day in a fit of yawning), there is no denying the high moral intention of the book, as, indeed, of all Hannah More's works. Her soul was anchored in the harbour of Eternal peace, and it was quite impossible for any girl to be long near her without her trying to bring the young spirit into the same safe resting place. Selina's nature was peculiarly ready to obey such a call, and from that time forward her Lord became not only her Master but her Friend.

When, at length, Selina Mills left school, she went well endowed for the journey of life. She had an intellect which, though it was not creative, was peculiarly receptive; the safest attribute perhaps of the two for the mind of a woman. She had graces of person which, though they did not dazzle, attracted softly, and held all the more firmly those drawn towards her. She had assured to herself the title deeds of her inheritance in the Everlasting City.

In the days when Selina Mills made her first entrance into society, there was only one possible future open to a young lady. She could not write books, because no young woman in her station ever did such a thing. Hannah More had certainly done it, but then Hannah was the exception which there always must be to prove every rule. She could not devote herself to visiting the poor in back streets, or teaching in ragged schools, because the very clergy themselves would have opened their reverend eyes wide enough, had they been told that such were their duties. She could not start to travel alone around the world, unless she wanted to be followed by a band of all her male relations, and brought back to a lunatic asylum. There was then nothing left for her but matrimony.

Selina Mills had of course to comply with the common order of things, and to look out for a husband. Unluckily, however, none of the gentlemen in Bristol or its neighbourhood were to her taste, and her heart strongly objected to her hand being given without it; though her family, it seems, would not have disliked the arrangement. Such things were done every day in the eighteenth century as they are in the nineteenth.

At length there came upon the scene where Selina was playing the heroine, and no doubt beginning to find the fact of there being no hero somewhat dull, a certain Zachary Macaulay. He came from the coast of Africa, fresh from a life of stirring adventure. He had been fighting hand to hand with the infernal power of the slave trade, a fact which was in itself enough to kindle the fancy of any high-souled woman concerning him. He stood on a lofty pinnacle of moral and religious principle. How he managed it we do not exactly know; perhaps, considering the experiences of his past life, he wooed her something after the Othello fashion, but certain it is that this Zachary Macaulay took the heart of Selina at once by storm. But her relations looked

with no favour on her choice. There was too great a savour of the adventurer to please them about this young man from the African coast. His opinions about the slave trade had not yet begun to be very widely spread. He was no great match in the way of family, for his Scotch ancestry boasted rather of ministers who preached long sermons than of chieftains who fought with long swords. He was no great match in the way of money, for there was something too chivalrous about him for the idea to be entertained that he could ever give his mind much to collecting wealth for himself. No, he was not the husband they wanted for their pretty Selina. But

"He who stems a stream with sand,  
Or binds a flame with flaxen band,  
Has yet a harder task to prove,  
By stern resolve to conquer love,"

was as true as usual in this case. The lovers had made up their minds, and nothing could shake them.

Hannah More, who still regarded her old pupil with almost motherly affection, and who was at once interested in the matter, invited Selina to stay with her at Barley Wood, and asked Mr. Macaulay to meet her there. Finding him the sort of man she liked and approved of, although he was not exactly a Coelebs, she at once decidedly favoured the match. Miss Patty, it is true, having just got some new crotchet into her head about woman living for female friendship alone, at first made some mild opposition; but then no one at Barley Wood thought any more of certain periodical sentimental fancies with which Patty was seized than they would have done of the caprices of a pet poodle. So the lovers were allowed to spend the morning together in the garden with a difficult book as a convenient reason, and to sit side by side in the twilight, while Hannah dozed accommodately, without the slightest molestation.

At length the steadfastness of the lovers and Hannah More's intercession were victorious, and the pair were allowed to be openly engaged. But Selina's family would not hear of her going out to Africa with her husband: so a long period of weary waiting and separation had to be passed through by her while Mr. Macaulay went abroad for the final winding-up of his affairs in that foreign land: a land, in those days of no steamers and no telegraphs, much more distant and mysteriously indistinct to the mind's eye of those at home in England than it is now. This time of absence was, however, rendered more endurable to the young promised wife by her spending part of it at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, with her lover's sister, Mrs. Babington.

These days of anxious trial were at last over for Selina. Zachary Macaulay returned home in safety, and they were married. The first year of their wedded life was spent in London. It must have been a

considerable change for Selina, for in those days there was a yet wider difference than there is now between a provincial town and the capital.

When, however, the birth of Mrs. Macaulay's first child was at hand, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Babington, with all the pretty fussy anxiety of a young matron, asked her to come and stay at Rothley Temple for the important event. Accordingly, Selina and her baby clothes travelled down into Leicestershire. Rothley Temple was the very embodiment of the popular idea of an old manor house. There were long dark passages in which ghosts might flit up and down. There were deep bay windows in which lovers might whisper. There were broad fire-places by which grandmothers might sit and tell tales of the olden time. In this house of romance and memory, in the year 1800, Thomas Babington Macaulay was born.

There is no point of her life in which the strong good sense of Selina Macaulay shows itself so fully as in her treatment of her son. Most mothers, from the day when the wonderful boy read fluently at three years old to the day when he made his maiden speech in parliament, would have spent their time in a state of perpetual adoration before him. First in praise of the child, then in honour of the youth, the litany of foolish indiscriminating love would have flowed on, till very likely all that was best in his nature would have been choked by such a cloud of incense. Dearly though she loved her son, proud though were the pulses which stirred her heart when she dreamt of his future, Selina Macaulay never let her affection for him work him injury. When, at seven or eight, he wrote hymns and began epic poems, she talked to him as if such things were as common with boys of his age as marbles or nine-pins. When, with something of the waywardness of young genius, he wanted to be idle, she kept him gently but firmly to the path of steady work. On the other hand, when his father, with that touch of sternness which was inherent in his nature, expected in the boy more thoughtful regularity of conduct than was compatible with either his years or his superabundant energy, she put herself between the two as a judicious barrier.

The affection with which young Macaulay regarded his home seems to have had something almost passionate in its character. We know whose was the genial and gracious influence which, like a golden thread, ran through that large family, from the hard-worked father down to the prattling baby, making that home a place in which her gifted son could find rest and joy; we know it, and feel that the mother of a Thomas Babington Macaulay has as great a mission in the world as a Madame de Stael or an Elizabeth Fry.

One great and good work which Selina Macaulay did for her son was the thorough early knowledge she put into him of Scripture. Macaulay's style and diction would probably never have been what they are if the English Bible had not been thus deeply laid in his



boyish mind and memory. Macaulay's life, and the intoxicating breath of flattery which surrounded him in middle age on the river of hurried work which swept him along, would never have been so true to the right and the noble, had not that old Bible music still been ringing in his heart.

Throughout their long years of married life no single cloud ever darkened the mutual love and trust of Zachary and Selina Macaulay. The very closeness, however, of the tie which bound her to her husband brought Selina many trials. Zachary Macaulay's whole existence was one long struggle against the slave trade. Before that contest was won, those engaged in it had to undergo many a defeat, many a disappointment, to bear patiently many a misinterpretation of pure and lofty intention. The iron firmness of Zachary Macaulay's character enabled him to endure all this with calmness, but the more delicate organisation of his wife felt keenly each blow which was aimed at him. It was a rich life, rich in smiles and tears, the life of Selina Macaulay. There were the elder daughters to be led softly from girlhood into womanhood; there were the little ones to be played with; there was her husband to be talked to with sympathetic comprehension; there was Tom to be listened to when he ran in overflowing with airy fun and racy anecdote.

The home of the Macaulays was for a considerable time at Clapham. There they were surrounded by a little band of friends whose religious and political opinions were entirely congenial to those of Selina's husband; whose hearts, like his, throbbed with a great longing to see the horrors of slavery banished from the British dominions. Even now they rise up before us, that glorious company of the abolitionists—Wilberforce, with his plain face and silver voice, his broken health, and his nature overflowing with cheery life; and Thornton, walking in his own calm grove of thought; and good old Buxton, with his high yet childlike faith, turning to his Bible for a sign before he made a speech; and Zachary Macaulay himself, with his worn intellectual features bearing the marks of his long championship in the cause. It was in a home where men like these went and came familiarly that Selina Macaulay reigned in her woman's kingdom.

Selina did not live to be an old woman, but she lived to see the first rays of his fame shine round her great son. Her end was hastened by the sudden death of one of her daughters; she never recovered the shock. She passed away gently, surrounded by those she loved. As we turn from her story the thought uppermost in our mind is that motherhood is a high mission for woman.

ALICE KING.

## MARGARET'S GRAVE.

## I.

MARGARET GREY sat in the summer twilight singing to herself a plaintive song that she had learned years before, when she was a light-hearted girl in her pleasant home in merry England.

The moon came softly up in the sky, and bathed her fairer face in its fair light; while the sweet breath of song floated out into the purple atmosphere.

There had been talking in the next room. Mr. Ensor was leaning over his half-promised bride, Leslie Russell. He was a good-looking man of some eight-and-twenty years; and Miss Russell, coquette though she was, loved him.

"To-morrow, or the next day then, you will give me an answer, Leslie?"

What a tender touch his fingers had—what a subtle music lingered in every tone—as he leaned nearer to catch her whispered reply.

And then—instead of the low "Yes" for which he waited, there came that burst of song in the other room; which drowned every other sound as the sunlight drowns the little wave of colour on the rose.

Breathlessly he waited, and Miss Russell glancing up caught the eager glance of enquiry in his look, but not at her.

"You are thinking of the song and not of me," she exclaimed pettishly, for she was frightfully exacting and loved to try him. "You need not expect your answer for a week, Mr. Ensor, though it would only be fair if I should tell you 'no' this minute."

"I will not deny," he said softly, "that the song interrupted me and my thoughts of you—or, I would rather say *met* it like a brave accompaniment. I used to sing it years ago; and, if my memory serves me faithfully, it is a song of youth and love. Can you wonder that it seemed like a prophecy?"

"Are you telling me the truth, Richard?"

He bent over and stole a kiss from her red lips; and murmured the refrain to the song which had so strangely moved him.

"Forgive me," she said, the vexed frown vanishing from her face. "I will not make you wait. I will be your wife, Richard."

"Thank you! thank you, my darling! You have made me the happiest man in the universe! And now you shall tell me who the ugly little singer is who dared to trouble us with her song?"

"You are laughing at me now," she said shyly, as he drew her hand within his. "Margaret Grey is neither little nor ugly."

"Margaret Grey!" In the tone, as he echoed the name, there was a sound as though he had been startled. He coughed it down at once and went on carelessly.

"And is this Margaret Grey a friend of yours? If so, I will never say a word against her."

"Not quite a friend, though papa did bring her here to be a companion for me. I am sure," she said, and a sudden shiver seemed to stir her as though she were cold, "I did not want her. Mamma wishes she had never come away from England!"

"English, too!" he exclaimed, though he could have bitten his tongue out the next minute, to think he had used that unguarded expression.

"*English too!*" repeated Leslie, her bright face glowing a shade paler. "What does that mean, Richard? I hope there is no mystery about Miss Grey. Have you ever known any English girl of the name?"

"There is no mystery about the lady that I know of," he said, laughing. "I was only surprised that your mother should tolerate anything English in her house. You see I am fast learning Mrs. Russell's likes and dislikes, little Blossom."

"Mamma doesn't quite care for her, I believe; but papa, when he was dying, made her promise to be a friend to Margaret, and to have her here always if Miss Grey liked to stay. I think she was the daughter of an old friend of papa's in England."

"But I don't quite understand," cried Mr. Ensor. "If Miss Grey lives here, how is it that I have never before seen her?"

"You are stupid, Richard. She has been away on a long visit to some people, and only returned to-day. There! do not let us talk any longer of Margaret Grey, or I shall be jealous," concluded the foolish girl.

"*You* jealous, Leslie. I never used to think you *could* be jealous!"

"But I can be and am," she replied, with a quick glance from her dark violet eyes. "I am jealous of that home in England which I have never seen, and which you love so well. I am jealous of the very servants who have surrounded you with loving attentions from your boyhood until now; and, more than all, I am jealous of those fair English girls who have been your companions. You are nearly ten years older than I, Richard,—tell me if you loved any other woman before you saw me?"

"Have I not told you a hundred times, you vain young lady, that I do not care for anyone but you?—that I don't know a woman's face save yours? Other forms and faces—no matter how fair—passed me by like shadows; but your face, little Blossom, I know it by heart!"

"Shut your eyes, then, and tell me what it is like."

He shut his eyes and leaned back against the dark velvet cushions of the chair, a half-defined smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"Now begin," she said, softly.

"First," he said, reaching out his hand until he could touch the proud little head, "there are two eyes shining down on me like stars; they are blue in the sunshine, and purple as pansies in the shade; there is a straight little nose, and a beautiful mouth with transparent teeth; rosy cheeks, made for a lover's kisses; a dainty chin with a dimple in it, and a slender white throat, fit only for strings of milk-white pearls! Then, over all, there is a wealth of nut-brown hair around my darling's face, where just now the lilly and the rose are holding sweet contention. May I open my eyes now, Blossom?"

There was no reply; and he looked up suddenly, to find Leslie with her face hidden in her hands, and tears dropping through her fingers.

"Why, Leslie, my darling, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Richard," she said, softly sobbing, "do you really love me as much as you say? When I shall be your wife, will there never be another face to come between us?"

A moment's solemn pause. And then Richard Ensor spoke gravely, "Trust me, Leslie, *nothing* shall ever come between us. Not even a memory?"

But, even as he went out, he whispered a word or two to Miss Grey in passing. She was then sitting under the stars by the acacia tree.

"Be entirely silent until we have spoken together, Margaret. For my sake."

Never in all her young and careless life had Leslie Russell awakened to joy so great as on that first day after she had promised to be Richard Ensor's wife.

She had her little faults and follies; but she was a good girl withal; and she loved him deeply, and meant to be ever faithful and true.

It was the first day of May. Bird-songs were ringing in the trees, the gay, golden sunbeams were dancing on the greensward; and over the far-away purple hills a mantle of soft mist hung, kissed by the glad morning from sober grey to a brilliant amethyst.

Leslie sat at her window a long time, looking out with sparkling eyes upon the landscape, whose smallest feature had been familiar to her from her childhood; but she did not note much of its varied beauties—she only felt that Richard Ensor loved her, and under that sweet knowledge all the world grew bright.

It seemed to her as if she had no longer any wish ungratified, unless it was—ah, there was Richard himself coming up the walk; and with a gay good-morning nod, she flew down the stairs to welcome him.

But when she reached the hall, Margaret Grey stood like a shadow

in her path ; and she felt half undecided whether to go straight forward to meet her lover, or to turn back. And why this curious feeling in regard to Margaret should have dawned on her, the semi-jealousy, she knew not. Margaret saw her, turned from Mr. Ensor, to whom she was about to speak, and met her with a smile, saying she would take the flowers (some she held in her hand) to the breakfast-room.

"Flowers!" exclaimed Leslie in surprise. "Where did you get such beauties?"

And she bent her head to hide her pink cheeks among the pink blossoms.

"In the woods, dear," Margaret replied, kissing the white forehead lightly, while her own cheeks burned brightly. "They are only simple wild flowers, but I know how your mother enjoys seeing flowers near her always, and so——"

"But there is the garden," Leslie said, a slight surprise in her voice; "it is fairly overflowing with flowers. Could you not have gathered your bouquet there?"

"To tell the truth, I believe the bright morning tempted me," replied Margaret. "And you know your mother was longing yesterday for some wild flowers. I was up hours ago," she added, laughing, and vanished.

At that moment the walnut leaves of the outer door swung open, and Mr. Ensor came in, a perplexed look in his dark eyes. But it was succeeded by an expression of instant relief when he saw Leslie.

"*Dear Leslie!*" Mr. Ensor murmured, as she met him. "You must forgive this early intrusion, but I could wait no longer to know if my happiness was a reality! The shadows of the night made me half afraid that the hope was, after all, only a dream."

"A pleasant dream is sometimes better than the reality!" Leslie said, laughing.

"But not in this case," he rejoined. "I wish I had you safe and sure, my darling."

Looking up, Leslie saw her mother standing silent on the stairs above. Her face was very pale, and she struggled vainly with the emotions which strove to master her.

"Mamma, dear mamma!" Leslie cried, dropping her lover's hand, and running up to meet her mother. "What is the matter?"

But her mother's face was turned away, and her hand was cold in Leslie's grasp.

"Mrs. Russell, will you give me just ten minutes before breakfast?" asked Mr. Ensor.

"As many minutes as you wish," she replied, a little haughtily. "You are an early visitor. We do not breakfast until ten. Leslie, wait for me ; I will see Mr. Ensor in the library."

Leslie obeyed in silence ; she did not like the look on Mrs. Russell's

face. She turned into the breakfast-room, where she stood idly by the table, and pulled to pieces the tiny bouquet Margaret had left at her plate.

Mrs. Russell went on to the library, and when they were shut in, motioned her visitor to a seat opposite her own.

"And now, Mr. Ensor, what is it you have to say to me?"

"I want you to give me your daughter," he said, coming at once to the point. "I have loved her for some time, Mrs. Russell. Last night I spoke, and asked her to be my wife."

"And what did Miss Russell say?"

"She acknowledged that she *loved* me," he said, with a smile of sweet triumph in his eyes. "I do not think that you will refuse to make us happy, Mrs. Russell?"

"I refuse you nothing," she said, calmly; "but as Leslie has no father to look after her interests, you must excuse me if I enquire into your capability of suitably maintaining my daughter."

"It is only right that you should do so," Mr. Ensor frankly answered. "Hitherto my income has been comparatively small, an easy competence; but my uncle is now dead—as you have, I think, heard—and I am his sole heir. I wish to go home to England as soon as may be now, to enter into possession of the estate."

"And his estate was—?" Mrs. Russell began, leaning eagerly forward.

There was some scorn on Mr. Ensor's face, but he suppressed it at once. Mrs. Russell was mercenary to a degree.

"Your daughter loved me as a poor man, Mrs. Russell; but to you I will say that my income will be a very large one. Vouchers for it shall be laid before you."

A swift red mantled Mrs. Russell's face and neck, but she managed to rise with her usual dignity.

"We must think of everything," she said, giving her hand to her future son-in-law. "Young people, lovers especially, think they can live on sentiment; but those of us who have gained experience in the world know differently!"

"You are satisfied, then, with Leslie's decision?"

"Yes," she said. And Mrs. Russell sank back in her chair with a satisfied smile on her face. For she had done just what she had always intended to do—secured a rich husband for her daughter.

Margaret Grey had fought a stern battle with her own heart, and come off conqueror.

A dozen times she had said to herself that first night that she would go to Richard Ensor, and insist upon his speaking. But she did not do it; perhaps for the sake of those old happy times in Europe.

"I have sacrificed so much for them all. Must I make yet another sacrifice for Leslie's sake?"



But then, over and above every bitter feeling was the memory of the light kiss Leslie Russell had left on her lips in greeting. Her heart thrilled as she thought of it; her eyes ran over with tears. For if there was one quality Margaret possessed above all, it was that of tender affection.

"No!" she exclaimed. "Mine shall not be the hand to dash down her cup of happiness. If I must live in silence, and carry these secrets to the grave with me, I will not make a hardship of the duty. Still, I think—I think he ought not to deceive her."

And brushing the waves of dark hair back from her brow, she tied on her pretty gypsy hat, and went down stairs and out, to gather her wild flowers. Coming back, she had seen Mr. Ensor.

"Richard!"

He turned swiftly. "Not here, not now, Margaret. We may be seen from the windows."

"But, Richard!" she murmured, half under her breath.

"Do not speak here, dear Margaret, though I know you have every right. I will meet you early to-morrow morning when you go to the wood to gather your wild flowers. We can talk there without fear of interruption."

She bowed in assent. He opened the gate for her to pass through before him, and lifted his hat.

And Leslie, watching from an upper window, had seen all this. A little spasm of jealousy stirred her heart-strings; a shadow, light as a summer cloud, rested on her brow.

"Of course, Richard had to open the gate for her; he is always a gentleman," she told herself. "But—they talked and looked as though they knew each other."

And on that first night, now just past, when Richard Ensor reached his hotel in the town hard by, he began pacing his chamber with restless steps, as though something called him. Curious thoughts were troubling his brain.

"How the old faces come back!—and how false those days were when I told myself I was half-forgetting! Poor Margaret: I *am* sorry for her; yet I am *not* brave enough to tell Leslie the truth!"

And flinging up the window, he sat down to think out his puzzle.

Thoughts came fast thronging to his brain of the old, happy days in Europe; of these new, still happier days in America; and in all, this new-found happiness he had cherished no remembrance of poor lonely Margaret; no pity for her desolation.

Mr. Ensor went forth on the appointed morning to his meeting with Margaret Grey. What passed between them was spoken of by neither. At Mrs. Russell's there was no token given that they had ever known each other: even Leslie thought she must have been

mistaken. And in a day or two's time Margaret Grey showed an invitation that some friends had sent her, and went away again.

"It was no loss," said Mrs. Russell, "for she was sad enough to throw a gloom on the house."

And Richard Ensor married Miss Russell, and took her to his own home in England.

It was at Guerre, a quaint little town in the south of France.

Mr. and Mrs. Ensor, husband and wife for twelve months now, had halted at it. Fatigued with the London season, distracted with gaiety, they had gone forth on the continent, which he seemed to know so well, and travelled slowly and easily from place to place, just as whim or will prompted. They had not meant to stay at Guerre; it was but a stupid place at the best, Mr. Ensor told his wife; he had passed a short time at it once; but the breaking down of their travelling carriage compelled a halt at it. They did not favour the noisy and bustling railways, rather preferring to take their wanderings easily. Mr. Ensor, who appeared to chafe unaccountably at the delay, went to see after the damaged carriage, as soon as he had deposited his wife safely at the inn; a rural domicile, just outside the town, and standing in the midst of a lovely garden and still more lovely scenery. It turned out that the carriage had been damaged more than was supposed; two days would not more than suffice to mend it.

"What a fool I was to shape our course through Guerre!" mentally uttered Mr. Ensor. "And why did I? Only through some absurdly romantic wish of catching a glimpse of the old place again. But I meant to drive straight through it: not to stop. One would think Fate was at work. Fool, fool!"

His wife meanwhile was standing on the balcony of their bedroom at the Pomme d'Or—as the inn was somewhat fancifully styled—gazing at the enchanting scenery, and listening for the return of her husband. He came in with a somewhat weary step and joined her on the balcony. She nestled close to him, leaning her pretty face upon his breast.

"No one can disturb us now, Richard," she said. "No balls, or dinners, or tiresome visitors are here. I could fancy that we were alone in the world. See how those beautiful vines shut us in, and surround us with a fragrance that is like a breath of Paradise."

In good truth they did seem alone as they stood. The clustering vines trailed thickly around the trellis-work of the balcony, shutting them in from the outer world.

"The fellow says he cannot get the carriage done under two days," cried Mr. Ensor, turning from the poetical to the practical. "What on earth we shall do, I can't tell."

"Do! Why, Richard, it will be delightful. I should like to stay here for weeks, instead of days."

"Oh should you," cried Richard, rather crossly. "My dear Leslie, you don't know what even a day's sojourn in these stupid dead-alive places is!—wearisome to a degree."

"It puts me in mind of my own dear land, Richard. Indeed, I like it. And—don't you remember—we have each other."

He looked down at her as she spoke, breathing the words in a tender whisper. For she loved her husband in a very passionate manner that perhaps was less wholesome than pleasant. For such love, when it exists, is apt to be too exacting, and to foster jealousy. The sun flickered on her face, now upturned to his, through the gently-waving vines, and Richard Ensor had never thought it so fair.

"We might perhaps hire another carriage, and get on to-morrow morning, Leslie. I tell you candidly I cannot stand two days of it."

"What, not with *me*! Oh Richard!"—holding up her pretty finger in laughing reproof. "Then you would have to go on without me; for in this charming place I must stop. And why do you talk so? It is as though you had some pressing business at the other end of the world, and must gallop on night and day to transact it."

He said no more. That idea of hiring a carriage occurred to him again and again; but he did not see his way clear to put it practically in force. For the very haste to get away from Guerre might perhaps excite suspicion in Leslie's mind. At least his all-too-suggestive conscience told him so. As Shakespeare says, Conscience makes us all cowards.

Mrs. Ensor was not very well the next morning. She got up, partly dressed, and had her breakfast taken to her room. Richard, going to her when his own breakfast was over, found her looking as white as her dressing-gown.

"Why, my darling, you have eaten nothing!"

"I cannot eat in a morning just now; you know it, Richard. I will try again by-and-by."

"Do so. And I think you had better lie down again, Leslie. You must not fatigue yourself, remember."

"Perhaps I will. You are going out, I see."

"I am going to see after that precious carriage."

Giving her a farewell kiss, Mr. Ensor went down stairs. Leslie stepped on to the balcony to watch him away with her eyes of love. At the far corner of it she could see a little portion of the garden path through one of the openings in the trellis-work.

And the air, as she stood there, felt so soft and balmy, so refreshing to her somewhat sick frame, that she resolved to finish dressing at once, and walk about the garden until he returned.

But the exertion wonderfully revived her. And, once in the garden,

she felt so well that she strolled into the road, leaving word with the landlady, who sat at the inn door shelling peas, that if Monsieur came in she had gone towards the town.

"But I daresay I shall meet him," thought Leslie. "I wonder whereabouts the coach-mender's place is? Richard said it was no better than a shed."

The sun was shining in the sky; but some white fleecy clouds broke its heat. The town was close at hand, Mrs. Ensor found: and she was soon at the entrance of the first street. All in a moment she caught sight of her husband, at a distance, apparently bargaining with a little flower-girl. As she began to quicken her pace to catch him, he disappeared.

"Flowers, lady?" asked the child, meeting her, and holding up the basket; in which roses and heartseases were respectively tied up in bunches. "They are very fair."

"So they are," said Leslie, who was a dear lover of flowers. "But do you find much sale for them, my child? I should have thought not: every house seems to have its own flowers here."

"Not those houses in the street further on, lady. And I sell them to the travellers. One or other of the two inns has often voyagers descending at it."

The child held up two of the bouquets as she spoke, so that the light might shine on them, and their perfume be brought nearer to the lady. Leslie took both in her hand.

"I wonder, she said," with a dreamy smile, "which is the prettier of the two?"

"The roses are as sweet as an angel's breath," the child answered, almost in a whisper; "but the purple pansies are sweeter. They are like your eyes, dear lady."

Leslie hesitated, quite ready to take both, but that a thought had occurred to her.

"I fancied I saw a gentleman buying some of you. Which did he take?"

"He took violets, lady."

"*Violets?*"

The child turned up a corner of the thin white cloth that covered the bottom of the basket, and displayed two or three bunches of violets.

"The time is nearly over for them, and they are getting scarce, lady," she said. "We keep them for the cemetery."

"What—to put upon the graves there?"

"Yes, it is our custom at Guerre. Few people wear violets. They spare them all for their dead lovers who are lying in the cold earth."

"And yet the gentleman bought violets, you say," said Leslie, smiling.

"I think he has a dead one lying there also, lady, for he turned off

straight to the cemetery with the violets. He was buying the roses at first, but he saw the violets accidentally, and I told him we kept them for the dear ones who were gone to be with the angels. He would buy some too, he said : and he put down the roses for the violets, and left a twenty-sous piece in my basket, never waiting for the change."

"Very odd," thought Leslie. "Perhaps the coach-mender lives that way. I will take the roses, my child, she said, and I will give you a franc too."

The little girl's eyes filled with tears. She had a sick mother; and she said—and felt—that the Bon Dieu must have sent this generous lady and gentleman in her way.

Leslie stepped on to the side road which her husband had taken, and found that it led to the cemetery. But it seemed to lead to nothing else: no houses stood there, not even the coach-mender's shed; it was a long, straight road, with tall poplar trees growing on either side. Mr. Ensor was evidently bound for the cemetery; he was walking on quickly, and Leslie could but just discern him in the distance. She followed quickly also, in some curiosity.

A quarter of an hour brought her to the graveyard; a sheltered spot, where the grass was green. It was very lonely, seeming to be filled solely with the graves of the dead, and the clustering shrubs and the trees that watched over them. Not a sign could Leslie see of any living person; not even of her husband.

All in a minute she saw him at a far-off grave in a corner. He had his back to her, and was standing bareheaded and quite silent, his face bent a little, as though he were praying. Leslie halted in very astonishment, and stood where she was. Suddenly his head was lifted. He undid the bunch of violets in his hand, and scattered them on the marble slab; and then he was still again, his head bent.

What feeling it was that induced Mrs. Ensor to step behind a high tombstone while he passed her, down the path, after quitting the grave, she could not have told. Some subtle instinct possibly. At any rate, it was what she did. And when Mr. Ensor was fairly launched on the highway between the poplars on his way back to Guerre, she walked up to look at the tomb and the scattered violets, and to read its inscription:—

"Sacred to the Memory of  
MARGARET VIOLA, the beloved Wife of RICHARD ENSOR.  
Age 18."

To say that the present wife of Richard Ensor did not for a few moments credit her sight or her senses, that she was more bewildered than she had ever been in her whole life before, would be saying little. Staggering back against an opposite tombstone, Leslie strove to collect herself.

"Margaret Viola! Why that was Margaret Grey!—the Margaret who had lived with them in America. Her name was Viola as well as Margaret. Viola Margaret, as Leslie had always believed, and those who placed it on this tomb had put the wrong name first. Was Margaret *dead*?—she did not know it. She had not heard of Margaret since that long-ago time when she had written to decline to come to their wedding. What did it all mean? Margaret was certainly alive then: and—why—then—how could she—she, herself, Leslie—how could she be his wife?"

Sick and faint, with a deathly moisture clinging to her brow, poor Leslie Ensor strove to think it out, to bring light out of chaos. The more she thought, the worse it looked: for she could see but one solution.

Margaret Grey must have been his wife, and Margaret must have come to this remote French village during the past twelvemonth, and died.

What was she to do? Oh, what ought her course to be?

Smarting, stung, outraged in every sense and feeling, Leslie Ensor quitted the spot with a great cry, and went swiftly back to the Pomme d'Or. She was very nearly mad; and perhaps little more responsible for her actions in that dreadful hour than a true mad-woman would have been.

"Monsieur votre Mari has been in after you, madame," was the salutation of the hostess; who had finished her peas and now sat picking the salad. "He is gone back to the town to look for you."

"C'est bien," responded Leslie: and tore up the stairs like a mad thing.

Pressing a change of linen into a black hand-bag, flinging a waterproof cloak over her dainty morning dress, and possessing herself of her larger purse—which had a good bit of money in it—Leslie Ensor quitted the Pomme d'Or. Madame had gone to the pump, there to wash the salad, and did not see her depart. Leslie knew there was a railway station about half a league off, for the carriage had passed it the previous day: and away she went towards it, panting and sighing, with fleet feet that hardly seemed to touch the ground.

"For what place does Madame wish to take her ticket?" questioned the clerk, who was a female, and looked and spoke like a lady, perceiving Leslie waiting there when she opened the pigeon holes.

"For—Paris," replied Leslie in her dilemma: for she was entirely ignorant of the name of any nearer town.

"Paris!" repeated the lady. "Then Madame must wait two hours and forty minutes. No train goes in that direction before then."

That would never do. "Where does the next train go to, and when will it be in?" she asked aloud.

"It goes to many places. The next train will be here in ten



minutes. It will wait here ten minutes also, to allow an express to pass."

"Please to give me a ticket for—any place that is far off," said Leslie. "First-class." And the bureau dame gravely handed her a ticket with a long name upon it, and charged her twenty-three francs.

Down on a bench at the darkened end of the platform sat poor Leslie, not daring to go into the waiting-room lest she should be found. If her husband came up in pursuit, the waiting-rooms were the first places he would make for. What a deplorable oversight it was to have brought no veil! But in these impromptu flights one cannot think of everything.

"Margaret Viola, the beloved wife of Richard Ensor!"

The fatal words kept repeating themselves in her mind. "Eighteen?" she presently said in a dull dreamy kind of way. "Did she tell him she was only that? Deceit, deceit; deceit on all sides. She must be six-and-twenty at least."

Here came the train, slowly and cautiously into the station, as it is the good custom of French trains to come. Leslie glided out of her obscure corner, hoping in her ignorance to take her place at once. She would feel safer in the train than out of it.

"Leslie! Leslie Ensor!"

The salutation, spoken with intense surprise, came from a lady who was descending from a carriage, and met Leslie face to face. A piercing shriek echoed along the platform—the shriek of a woman in terror. Leslie thought she saw the dead; for in this woman, who spoke to her, she recognised Margaret Grey. And before the shriek had well faded from her lips, she fell down in a fainting fit. The porters carried her into the spacious waiting-room, and ran for some water.

And when the train had departed after the express had passed, and the station was quiet again, madame of the bureau came in to see what she could do for the sick lady. But the lady was better then, and had got half through the necessary explanation with Margaret Grey.

"And you are not dead! And you never were Richard's wife?"

"Neither the one nor the other," said Margaret. "I landed at Havre a day or two ago from a passenger vessel bound to that port from America, and have made my way on here——"

"To see me?" interrupted Leslie.

"To see my poor young sister's grave," answered Margaret. "I did not know you were not in London. I meant to come to your residence there shortly, to deliver the messages and other things I have brought you from your mother."

"But you must tell me all about the other Margaret; all, all," sobbed Leslie.

"My dear child, I have told you all: perhaps you were too bewil-

dered to understand me. She was my sister. There was a difference of several years in our ages, and I cared for her almost as I should have cared for a child. I was Viola Margaret, she Margaret Viola : it was a fancy of our mother's to give us the same names, which were her own, reversed. During my mother's last illness we were staying here, at Guerre. Richard Ensor, travelling from place to place, as he loved to do, came here one day, and was introduced to us. He was taken with my sister, and she with him, and they married upon impulse before they had known each other a month. Close upon that, my mother died. Her income, a very small one, died with her, and I went to London to look out for a situation. Mr. Ensor and my sister would have had me stay with them at Guerre, where they intended to remain for a time, but I wanted to be independent. In London I met your papa, Leslie. He had once been on the closest terms of friendship with my father ; and he insisted upon my making my home with you in America, but—you must pardon me for saying this, Leslie—your mother received me so coldly, and manifested so great a dislike to 'the English,' that I did not stay with her a week ; as you may have remembered to have heard. You were at school. I had other friends in America, at a distance from you, and I made an excuse to go to them : and I left your mother's house without once having spoken to her of my sister or of Mr. Ensor ; for in truth Mrs. Russell repelled me so much that I could not enter upon any topic connected with self. I procured a situation as governess close to the home of my new friends. The first news that reached me was of the death of Mr. Russell ; the next news was from France, and told me of the death of my poor young sister, who died and was buried at Guerre. After that I heard nothing of Mr. Ensor, and a twelvemonth, or so, passed. I was leaving my situation, and your mother wrote to ask me to stay a little time with her and be your companion. I——"

"And you came ; and joined Mr. Ensor," interrupted Leslie ; "and you appeared not to know each other, but to be strangers."

"Even so. I had not been in your house ten minutes, Leslie, when your mother spoke to me of a Mr. Ensor. She thought he was making up to you, and she was not quite satisfied about it : firstly, because she did not know whether he had good means, secondly because he was English. The name struck me. 'Is he a widower ?' I asked. 'Widower !' she indignantly replied, 'what put that in your head, Margaret Grey ? Do you suppose Leslie would think of marrying a widower ? She hates them !' But that same evening I found it was the same Richard Ensor. He seized a moment to speak to me. 'Be silent until I can explain,' he whispered. And when I saw him alone he entered on his explanation. It appeared that he fell in love with you at first sight. He did not at first mention that he was a widower :

perhaps a man rarely hastens to do so : and before he could find an opportunity, he heard you express your antipathy to widowers, and say that nothing would induce you to marry one. ' I can't give her up, Margaret,' he said to me ; ' I love her too well. If you will only be silent she need never know that Viola was my first wife.' Of course, I promised to keep his counsel ; what right had I to betray him ? But I did not like it, and went away again as soon as I could. That's the whole truth, Leslie. And you, you silly child, must take it into your head that I was the tenant of that grave, and run away in consequence ! "

Leslie leaned her face against Margaret, shedding some happy tears. The truth was so very much brighter than the dreadful improbabilities she had suspected, that she felt as though she were in Heaven.

" Do you think Richard will forgive me, Margaret ? " came the sobbing words.

" We can ask him. And perhaps we had better go back to the Pomme d'Or at once, Leslie, or he may be for setting the town crier to work."

" You will stay here now for a few days, won't you, Richard ? " pleaded the young wife, as she stood nestling to him that evening on the vine-wreathed balcony. " You don't want to hurry away now ? "

" I will stay as long as you like, my darling. All I feared was that you should see some one or other of the natives recognise me ; or discover that grave in the cemetery."

" If you had but confided in me, Richard ! "

" My dear wife, I always intended to tell you sometime. But I was a coward, and put it off. You can never know what a nightmare it has been to me."

" I shall take some violets to it myself to-morrow, Richard. May we not take some together ? "

" Yes ; oh yes. Thank Heaven for this peace—which is more than I deserve," fervently spoke Richard Ensor. " Thank Heaven for all things ! "



## EVE: AN IDYLL.

## I. TOWN.

I AM quite sensible of the advantage of being born "the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," and rejoice that I live in the days of railroads, telegraphic wires, cheap postage, and chloroform. But I delight in looking back from my present "vantage ground" on to the stormy plains of the past, and find it quite refreshing to picture it to myself in all its strong contrasts of gorgeous colour, and striking effects of chiaroscuro—virtue so resplendent, vice so deep in gloom—and the wide distinctions made more conspicuous by all the varieties of costume.

It is like turning from a nice smooth painting on papier-maché to a fine rugged old Rembrandt.

More especially do I like to pay an occasional morning visit—at no such great distance—to my great, great grandmother; and I politely offer you a seat in Fancy's car, if you are inclined to accompany me on the journey.

Those were

"The teacup days of paint and patch,  
And when the hoop was worn,"

before steam had "annihilated time and space," whirling all classes together across country, in one undistinguishable mass—when my lord and my lady lumbered along in a coach and six, exposed to all manner of dangers from holes and highwaymen; and Joan and Hodge, if bent on beholding the "gold-paved streets of Lon'on," must trudge afoot, or spend days, and even weeks, jolting in a waggon—when upon the smallest provocation swords were drawn and blood was spilt, and many a crime was committed for which the perpetrators were never called to account. Then fine ladies were very fine indeed, and lords were often very foppish, while the rustic peasantry were really rustic, for town or country seemed "far as the poles asunder." The world at home then knew little of what was going on abroad, or not till long after the events had taken place. Special correspondents had never been heard of; and the newspapers, or newsletters, as they were sometimes called, were small affairs indeed; not, as now, sheets that seem made for the perusal of giants.

But perhaps you think it time I should begin my story, if I have one to tell. How I came to know it is neither here nor there; I will tell it if you will listen.

Sometime in the earlier half of the last century—I am not quite sure of the exact date, so will not commit myself—the Countess of Millamant, then a young widow, was one of the reigning queens of fashion. Rich and beautiful, with some wit, and many whims, she was adored by the men, slandered by the women, and envied by all. She cared for none of her suitors; but kept them all chained to her footstool. Capricious as her pet monkey, and spiteful as her parrot, but beautiful as an angel, she was worshipped, fêted, and lampooned. All courted her for one cause or another; and she was now just beginning to be sick of adulation and of pleasure. Weary of continual sunshine, she even longed for a passing cloud, and, in short, was ready to die of ennui, under its then fashionable title of spleen.

See her holding her little court this fine June morning in—don't be shocked—her bed-chamber, and in—don't be still more shocked—her bed. Yes, there she is, in the midst of clouds of lace, cambric, and fine linen, looking—I really must use the well-worn simile, it is so appropriate—like Venus rising from the sea foam. Her face is made up for the day, and glows with artificial brilliancy—her large brown eyes, which no art can alter, shining with a lustre all their own, and appearing unnaturally conspicuous, amid the mass of white paint and powder which conceals both hair and skin.

Her bed is all satin and lace, the quilt a miracle of embroidery, fit screen before so fair a shrine. The lofty room is hung with finest tapestry, where nymphs and cupids disport themselves in airy attitudes and scanty garments. The carpet is of thickest pile, the toilette a little museum of curiosities, and tall Venetian mirrors reflect and multiply the luxurious scene.

I said the Countess was holding her court; the courtiers all of the male sex; and no harm was thought. French manners prevailed in the highest classes, and the reigning beauties often received their earliest bevy of adorers half concealed by the gorgeous curtains of their nightly couch.

Now, who were the adorers? First, shall the Church have preference. The family chaplain, in a distant window, flirted with the attendant abigail. Not daring to raise his eyes to the glorious midday sun, he worshipped its pale reflection in the moon, as personified by comely Mistress Prudence, so by name at least, if not by nature. The army was represented by Captain Terence O'Brien, a descendant of all the kings of Ireland; but descended so low that he would have been well content to forego his chance of the lovely widow's hand, could he only have hoped she would bestow on him a gift or loan to enable him to continue his gambling speculations.

A brace of lordlings were foremost in the picture. One, fair and foolish, loved the lady for herself; the other, an ugly fellow, with sharp wits and flattering tongue, sought to repair his fallen fortunes at her

expense. A millionaire courted her for fashion's sake ; a diplomatist to further his political schemes. All bowed before the idol of the hour, who yawned in their faces as she idly turned her attention to the choice of ribbons for the day.

The conversation, as might be expected among rivals, was rather broken and disjointed, and interspersed with a good deal of snapping and snarling, the highest notes of the concert being the voices of the two young lords ; while the Irishman, talking incessantly in a rich unctuous brogue, furnished a fine pedal base to the score.

"Ah!" said Lord Lackland, "that shows thy want of taste, my friend. What could suit a cheek of rose so well as the rose's own hue? The Queen of Flowers and the Queen of Beauty combined."

"Nay," rejoined Faircourt, "if we must needs follow suit, does not coquelicot match the coral of those lips?"

"Or," said a trembling youth, who had hitherto been all eyes and silent tongue, "why not azure? The hue of heaven for one all but divine."

This sally was received with some derision, and the lady, in a querulous tone, asked if 'twere not a pity he could not say the blue would match her eyes. Sir Terence O'Brien swore the heavens ought to be hung with black in their honour ; and with the laugh which followed came a chorus of laudatory remarks on those certainly magnificent orbs, which their owner received with ill-disguised contempt, asking if there was not one man of parts among them who could furnish a newer theme.

Then she called for her jewels, and the couch soon glittered with the contents of half a dozen caskets. This brought the millionaire to the front, who produced a costly pendent as an offering to the fair one. She accepted it with calm indifference, and, scarcely thanking the munificent donor, tossed it aside among the other trinkets.

Now, the disdain and caprice of this spoiled beauty were genuine—the result of the hotbed of prosperity in which she had been reared. She had lived in luxury and listened to adulation till both had lost their power to please. But, strange to say, her very faults added to her popularity. Had she assumed these airs to enhance the piquancy of her charms, she could not have succeeded better ; and when the servile crowd was dismissed that day, that she might proceed to the business of the toilette, all departed more enamoured than ever of the undeniable charms of her person and her purse.

That night there were masks at a fashionable place of public resort, and Lady Millamant must needs be there ; not that she expected much enjoyment, but because she did not know what to do at home. Too indolent to devise a fancy costume, she would wear a domino ; but ere the domino was donned, a long and most elaborate toilette was completed. A dress of the richest brocade, with flowers in their natural



colours, interspersed with threads of gold, was trimmed with the finest lace and knots of ribbon mixed with strings of pearls. All spread out over panniers of enormous size, displayed to advantage the beauty of the material and the stately grace of the wearer: while her powdered hair, raised on cushions nearly two feet above her head, blazed with diamonds, and derived additional grandeur from a plume of feathers, which, like a palm-tree on the top of a high hill, surmounted the whole. And it must be admitted that, exaggerated and artificial as was the dress, the effect of the whole figure was wondrous beautiful. The clear whiteness of the hair and powdered skin, and of the white ground of the dress, brought out her dark eyes and brows—the only dark objects about her, except an “assassin” near her mouth—with a lustre which was absolutely dazzling. And when her beautiful features lost for a moment their usual expression of indolent languor in the triumph of conscious beauty, as she gazed at her full-length reflection in the glass, none who saw her could dispute her claim to reign a goddess in the hearts of men.

When she arrived at the ball it was already crowded. A black velvet mask covered her features, and a domino eclipsed the splendour of her dress; but to those well acquainted with her, the carriage of her head, and the grace of her movements, revealed the divinity within, and she was soon surrounded by an admiring throng.

Though all were masked, most of them she recognised in her turn by some trick of gesture or peculiarity of voice; but, as she gazed around, her attention was arrested by the entrance of a person she felt sure she had never met before. Yet he seemed one well worth the knowing. Like the rest a mask concealed his face, but the domino displaced, and hanging on his arm, displayed in full the supreme elegance of his tall figure, and the unparalleled magnificence of his dress. The extended skirts of his blue velvet coat set off the richness of the silver embroidery; his buttons and buckles, of diamonds of the finest water, eclipsed all the surrounding paste! his sword-hilt blazed with gems, and the lace of his cravat and ruffles might have moved the envy of the proudest belle. He wore his own hair, powdered, then rather unusual; indeed, all about him was somewhat singular, though certainly singularly elegant.

His appearance caused a flutter of excitement, and the whisper “Who is he?” went round the circle. The men criticized, the women admired. At last one better informed than the rest, proclaimed him to be the young Marquis of Riverdale, son of the Duke of Broadlands, who had just returned from long travel in France and Italy: and a certain foreign air, and the fact that he was new to the world, seemed to justify the assertion.

Our Countess, as he approached, moved perhaps by a desire that the admiration she felt should be reciprocal, under pretence of heat,

removed her mask, and throwing back her domino, appeared suddenly in the full blaze of her unrivalled beauty. The unknown started, and turning to the nearest bystander, eagerly enquired her name.

"What, sir," said the person addressed; "not know the Countess Millamant? You must be indeed a stranger to the town, not to know the fairest woman in it."

"I have been long abroad," quoth he, "and have seen too many fairest women to bear any of them long in mind; but this is, I must admit, a splendid beauty."

So saying, he advanced towards the Countess, and with the freedom a mask allows, addressed her in the high-flown language of the day, begging permission to worship as a pilgrim at the shrine of Venus. This she graciously accorded, provided he could bring some flowers of wit and wisdom as an offering to the goddess.

"Madam," cried the stranger, "beauty like yours might inspire the dullest brain, as well as move the coldest heart, did not awe enchain the tongue." And so they went on for some time, till both seemed tired of the mimic courtship. They remained the most conspicuous figures among the gay and motley throng, but did not seek one another again.

As Lady Millamant went home that night, borne in her gilded, cushioned chair, at the brisk trot of two strapping Irishmen, her lacqueys at once lighting and clearing the way before her, she reflected with many sighs on the emptiness of worldly pleasures. Oh, for a new sensation; for anything which could produce other feelings than weariness and vexation, gambling. "I might have been ruined, but luck and my large fortune were against me, and I never lost or won at cards enough to give me pleasure, or to cause a pang. Love!—ah! that were no doubt emotion—joy, sorrow, hope, and fear in one, but I have never known it, and I never shall. My husband's age precluded the possibility of any warmer feeling than esteem, and as to the poor creatures who surround me, and feel, or feign, a flame—how to reciprocate it for any one of them? The pretty fellows are so often rakes, the men of parts are mostly prigs, foolish, foppish, false—and tiresome all. To-night, the travelled air, the noble mien of the Marquis of Riverdale inspired a hope that he might prove more interesting than the rest—but no; the same nonsense flowed from his lips in the same weary drawl, and Venus and Cupid still did duty for life and love."

Here she arrived at the door of her splendid mansion. The footmen thrust their torches into the extinguishers provided for the purpose, and Lady Millamant stepped from her chair into the lofty hall, and accompanied by her waiting woman, regained the gorgeous suite of apartments she had not long quitted.

There she threw herself into an armchair with a portentous yawn.

"Oh, my lady has the vapours again," cried Prudence, "and to-

night, of all nights in the year, when, on my conscience, she looks ten times more beautiful than ever, and, I dare swear, ten thousand times more beautiful than any other dame or damsel at the fête—and better dressed forsooth! Who else has such a brocade as that—so rich and fanciful! Oh! if I were my lady with dresses and jewels, and love, and lovers by the score, I'll wager I would laugh spleen and vapours away, and be happy from morning till night."

"Prudence, I am sick of dress and jewels, and the assemblies where they shine; and as for love and lovers, the old ones love my wealth, the young ones love themselves. Love indeed!"

"Oh! my lady," cried Prudence, "do not miscall love! If you could only see my cousin Nell and her sweetheart, Roger Blake, who are to be married come Monday next, you'd never say that love was naught."

"Roger and Nell—some rustic party, no doubt. Who are they, girl, that they should feel the love that is but feigned by us?"

"Roger, my lady, is the son of my Lord Faircourt's bailiff, and cousin Nell is uncle Simpson's daughter, one of Squire Woodfield's farmers. Ah! there will be mirth and happiness, and love eno' at that wedding, if only your ladyship could but see it."

"I wonder if the rustics do enjoy themselves, or if 'tis only outward seeming with them too! I have scarcely seen a tree or blade of grass, save in the Park or Spring Garden, for many a year. I go sometimes to Greenwich or to Richmond by the river, it is true; but then one's so beset one scarce looks round. I wonder what the real country may be like, and how the country people feel who never come to town."

"Would your ladyship like to try it? Why should you not go to see my cousin's wedding? It is not far. Four horses would take you there in an hour, although the road is somewhat rough; and how honoured would they feel if your ladyship would but give them your countenance."

"Nay; if I go it shall not be to honour or be honoured. I will be a country lass for the nonce, just to see how it feels. You shall get me a dress, and take me as your friend." And as she spoke the novelty of the idea brought light into her eyes and a ring of gladness into her voice. "Can it be done, think you, Prudence, nobody knowing?"

"Oh! my lady, 'twould be charming," cried Prudence, as delighted with the scheme as her mistress; "just like a play-acting. I will get a dress in which your ladyship will look divine. We will go to the shop of a friend in the city, whom I can trust. You send the carriage home, and we can slip out by the back door, take a hackney-coach to a farm-house near my uncle's, then walk across the fields, and arrive at the merry-making like two countrywomen. Oh! it will be pure! But what will you be called?"

"While I am about it, I will have no less a name than that of the

mother of all living. I will be Eve—Eve Woodley. It was my nurse's name, and seems a friendly one."

"Now, then, to provide a dress for your ladyship. I will about it instantly; there are but three days first."

And so Prudence left the Countess to her repose and much more pleasurable thoughts than she enjoyed before ennui was dissipated by a new idea.

## II. COUNTRY.

We change the scene to a rural village some five miles from London. Yes, reader, a *rural* village. Incredible as it may seem, in those days there were rural villages so near the metropolis.

In a pretty cottage room we find two young women. In one we recognize at once our old friend Prudence, looking in her best finery a very good specimen of her class; but in the other we certainly should fail to discover anyone we have ever seen before. She is a brilliant brunette of some three or four and twenty summers—a smiling, blushing, beaming beauty. Her face and figure are set off to the best advantage by the most becoming and coquettish of rustic dresses. A chintz gown, all flowered with branching pink roses, is drawn up gracefully over a quilted rose-coloured petticoat; and a little gipsy hat, with a tiny cap beneath it, all trimmed with rose-coloured ribbons, surmounts her magnificent black hair, which, raised on a cushion in front, falls in a profusion of glossy curls behind: altogether as pretty a piece of Dresden china as a collector could wish to place on his shelf, or enshrine in his cabinet.

Who could suppose that in this simple rustic belle he saw a proud court beauty—the magnificent, the capricious, the idolised Countess of Millamant? The difference of hair and complexion are striking enough; but the whole manner and bearing are changed. With her fine clothes she has laid aside fine airs, and now appears a sweet child of nature, joyous, simple, and true.

The fact is, the novelty of her situation and surroundings has imparted new happiness to her mind; and the aspects of nature, from which she has been so long estranged, give reality to her feelings, and life to her movements.

Prudence stood lost in admiration before her. "Surely, surely, my lady, you look more purely handsome than ever you did in your life. No one will have any eyes for the bride, though she's a buxom lassie, and I pity all the lads who look at you."

Lady Millamant affected to chide, but the consciousness of transcendent beauty mantled in her cheek and glanced in her eye, and she walked through the fields to the scene of festivity with a lighter heart and more elastic step than ever she trod the palace floors of St. James's.

On their arrival the merriment was at its height, and it must be owned a prettier picture was never presented to the eye. The richly-wooded landscape wore its best attire in the leafy month of June. The sun shone brightly, birds carolled their sweetest, brooks prattled their loudest, and the perfume of flowers and new-mown hay filled the air, till every sense was charmed.

The picturesque old house was almost covered with creeping plants and climbing roses, and around it, on homely chairs and rustic benches, sat the elders of the village, in sober suits, with calm, yet happy faces, gazing on the scene; while the young people, gaily clad in the picturesque fashion of the day, danced to the sound of the fiddle, or sat beneath the trees, whispering the old, old story, to the music of sighs.

It was, in short, an exceptionally pretty rustic gathering; hosts and guests were alike removed far above poverty, without seeking to aim at gentility—less tempted perhaps to that rather perilous ambition, in those days of comparative little intercourse, than they might be now, when most classes are but a bad imitation of those above them.

The bride and bridegroom especially were unusually interesting; the bride lovely, and the bridegroom loving, as is befitting; and all the assembly seemed to sympathize with, and rejoice in, their happiness.

Lady Millamant was introduced as a friend, and welcomed with rustic cordiality.

Immediately the country lads, forgetting their sweethearts and their sports, turned to gaze with a mixture of awe and admiration at the travestied Countess, whose wonderful beauty, and an air of grace and refinement which no disguise could conceal, astonished as much as it delighted them; but of all the band, one only stepped forward and approached her. A handsome, strapping young fellow, with a fine shape, and a bright blue eye, which seemed likely to make havoc in the hearts of the fair. His dress was plain, and might have been worn either by a gentleman engaged in country pursuits, or by a gamekeeper or farm bailiff as his Sunday suit. It was, at all events, neat, clean, and becoming, and was worn with an ease and grace that many a man of quality might have envied.

He addressed the stranger, who was for the time being "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." How the rustic swains longed to imitate the self-possession with which he chatted to the beauty. They only dared admire from a distance, whilst he bore her off in triumph to take part in the dance about to begin. Why, they asked one another, should he have a better chance than themselves? He was staying at a small inn in the neighbourhood, with neither servants nor equipage of any kind, passing his time chiefly in fishing, and might reasonably be supposed to be of the same class as themselves; and they grumbled accordingly.

But grumble as they might, they could not but admire, as the pair

floated by. It was the very poetry of motion. Two exceedingly handsome young people, possessed apparently by the same feeling, governed by the same impulse, they danced as though one soul animated both bodies.

And what was passing in their minds the while? Into hers at least we may venture to peep, and I may tell you that the predominant feeling was astonishment at the flood of rapture which seemed to fill her heart

Yes, the tender glances of those bright eyes, blue as a glimpse of Heaven, met for the first time amid the charms of nature, without any meretricious surroundings to divert her attention from their influence, warmed the cold heart of the Countess, as none had ever warmed it before. She seemed to tread on air, and hung upon his words; a happy flush was on her cheek, a happy light within her eyes; and none at that moment could have recognised the cold, capricious Countess of Millamant, who stole so many hearts, and scorned them all.

They talked familiarly, and he told her his name was Ralph Stedman; that he was bailiff to a great lord in the west, and had come there after some horses and hounds for his master, amusing himself meanwhile with fishing. And she, driven to her wits' end for a tale to tell, yet determined not to betray her identity; which, as it seemed to her, would break the spell and dissipate a happy dream; said that she lived with her friend, Prudence May, and plaited straw to make fine ladies' hats, and gained a livelihood as best she might. And so they danced and talked, and looked into each other's eyes, till both were far gone in that sweet delusion which some call love, and some but idle folly. The Countess had forgotten all her airs and affectations, and seemed a sweet child of nature all unspoiled by art; while he, though but a rustic swain, graced by some tincture of manners and refinement, seemed to her one of nature's noblemen; and she cared for naught beside.

"Fair Eve," he said, "would I were Adam for thy sake—fain would I dwell with thee for ever, though Paradise were lost. Say, how shall we meet again. Night is approaching, when we must part. Oh! doubly night, when thou art gone. Tell me where to find thee, or I shall die!"

"Nay, this is overbold; can you expect a modest maiden to give meetings to a man she has seen but once? Oh, fie!"

"Why fie? Not fie at all. We are alike in age, in station, and, as I hope, in temper, and in taste. Most lovely maid, more lovely in thy simple charms than the court belles in their brocades and paint, from the first moment I beheld you, all my heart was thine. Look kindly on my suit. When shall we meet again?"

She thought, "He little knows how unlike I am to what I seem. I must not go;" but she said, "I cannot promise, yet mayhap to-morrow Prudence and I may take an early walk—should the sun but shine—if not, we stay at home in yonder cottage by the stream."



Could anything be plainer? The lover's heart beat high with joy. He thought the prize his own, and was profuse in protestations. But then the Countess, half frightened at her own rashness, called to Prudence; who came unwillingly, loath to quit her own share of the sport; and with many thanks took leave of the worthy folks, whom she had puzzled at least as much as pleased.

Ralph longed to follow her, but fearing by too much eagerness to lose the place in her good graces he had gained, he most reluctantly forbore.

As they walked towards the cottage Prudence expected her lady to be eager to get back to town in time for that night's rout, the hackney coach awaiting them; but no. "I shall not return to-night. Why not sleep here? Your friends sure can keep us one night, and then tomorrow if the sun shines, we will walk down by the river, and listen to the carol of the birds! 'Twill be a pleasant pastime for the nonce."

Prudence was amazed as much as she could be by any new caprice of her capricious mistress; but this also pleased herself. She encouraged her lady in the whim. The hackney-coach was dismissed, charged with a message to my lady's people that she would bide in the country for a time; and the Countess slept that night a sweeter sleep on her rough pallet than ever on her bed of down, and dreamed most blissful dreams, in which one manly form appeared.

The air is fresh, the sky is clear, the green leaves cast a flickering shade, wild-flowers spring up among the grass, sweet sights and sounds are everywhere; but one thing is wanting to make the scene perfection—an Adam to our Eve.

He does not come.

She quite forgets that she has risen with the lark, that 'tis but six o'clock; and who could suppose a maid of any degree, unless obliged by stern necessity, would be afoot at such an hour. Unreasonable woman! She was furious that he was not first at the rendezvous. All the fair landscape took a leaden hue, the birds sang out of tune, the river seemed to stagnate in its course, and, after half an hour's loitering by the stream, indignant and amazed, she proposed to return to the cottage and find some means of going straight to town. Prudence, no way surprised at such sudden change of plans; to which, indeed, she was too well accustomed; turned her steps to go, when suddenly a man sprang through the copse, looked up and down the stream, and, with a cry of joy, advanced towards them; a handsome rustic, with just enough refinement in his air to set his beauty off to best advantage. And now, whether the previous disappointment enhanced the present pleasure I know not, but certain it is that the fair Countess felt a sudden rush of joy no courtly compliment of knight or squire had ever caused. And truly, what are the gratifications of vanity to the raptures of love? Her face beamed with the joy of her heart; and never, perhaps, in all

her life of loveliness, had the Countess of Millamant looked so beautiful as now.

The young man's admiration spoke in his eyes and trembled in his voice ; and Prudence, too experienced to need a second glance to tell her how matters stood, discreetly withdrew out of earshot. She thought her lady acting wondrous foolishly, but knew too well how useless would be advice or remonstrance to attempt either ; and, indeed, felt herself little fitted to enact the part of Marplot in Love's drama.

The talk between the two flowed on then unrestrained, mingled with loving looks and sly hand-pressures. "How different art thou, fairest Eve, from the fine ladies I see when I go about with my lord, and oh ! how much more lovely ! 'Tis strange, but thou remindest me of one I've seen but once, who is thought the fairest of them all—and yet what difference ! Her face is all one mask of paint and patch ; one can scarcely guess what the reality may be beneath. And then her mincing airs might suit a monkey on a vagrant's organ, but not a woman who is to be a wife and mother ; whilst thou, O beauteous Eve ! art all simplicity and truth. Yet, sooth to say, I see a wondrous likeness."

"And what," cried the Countess, "may be the name of this much praised, and yet much *dispraised* fair one ?"

"The Countess of Millamant. All know her. She is the toast of half the town."

She no doubt expected the answer, and yet she coloured, looked confused, and then indignant, and yet half pleased. Did she at once take the lesson to her heart ? We cannot tell. She said, "That lady were much flattered could she hear you."

"She would not heed the warning, I tell thee, Eve. I would not wed one of those court ladies had she a queen's dowry."

"Nor I court gallant," cried she, stung to retort. "What are they all ? Things made of patches, pads, and perukes. Their brilliancy all in their gold embroidery, their refinement in their lace ruffles, their grace in their red-heeled, diamond-buckled shoes, their brains—but no, what need to find a place for that which is not."

"Heyday, you seem to know them well, and art mighty severe upon them."

The Countess saw she had forgotten her part, and hastened to say, "Oh ! I have seen them when I went with my sister to the town, but speak no more of them ; speak of ourselves, of this sweet scene, the sunshine, and the flowers, and what to do to-morrow." And so they prattled on, as lovers do, while half-spoken words and sighs filled up the pauses in the talk, till poor Prudence was ready to fling herself into the river with impatience, hunger, and fatigue. But lovers know no such vulgar wants, and it was long ere they resolved to part, with many promises to meet again to-morrow. And so they did. The tryst by the riverside was often renewed in the sweet summer

weather. The Countess lingered on at the cottage, while the temporary eclipse of its brightest luminary filled the town with wonder and regret ; and, must we add, with scandal too, for many a tale was invented to fill up the void caused by the lack of real information.

But all must come to an end, even the bliss of lovers. One morning about ten days later, Prudence appeared before her mistress, her face full of excitement, her mouth full of tidings. "Oh ! madam, oh ! my lady—such news, such glorious news ! I give you a month of Sundays to guess it in ; but no, you'll never hit upon it. What think you ? Our peasant lover, our handsome clown, he is no clown, nor peasant either, no Ralph, no Stedman. He is the famous travelled beau, new to the town—the young Marquis of Riverdale, heir to the dukedom of Broadlands, and the wealth of the Indies besides. His man has just been down at the inn, and told us all ! And he——"

But she paused astonished. The lady, instead of being overwhelmed with joy, burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Why, madam, what is this ? Have you not understood ? He is a man of quality, a nobleman, and you can marry him at once."

"I will not marry him ! I waken from a blissful dream to dull reality. He is no better than the rest. What ! he's been laughing at me, playing a part intending to deceive a country girl. Where shall I go ? I'm sick of the town, now of the country, too. Ah, me ! the world is wide, but holds no happiness."

"No happiness ! not when I tell you you can wed your heart's choice without reproach or blame ? Sure, madam, had he been Ralph Stedman, the bailiff, you never would have sunk so low as to have married him."

"I would, and lived with him, 'mid fields, and trees, and flocks, and cooing doves, for ever and for ever."

"Oh ! my lady ——"

But she was interrupted by the entrance of the culprit himself.

He entered high in hope, beaming with joy ; but instead of the sunshine he expected, beheld a stormy sky. "What," cried my lady, "is it possible you dare appear before me ? I am amazed at your audacity."

"Dear love, what is it ?"

"What is't, indeed ! I know it all—I know your deceit, your falsehood, your base intentions—oh ! do not attempt to deny—what else could be between a man of your station and a woman of mine !"

"Alas ! I see that some ill-fortune has betrayed my secret before I intended it should be known, but," and he knelt before her, "hear me. It is quite true that when we first met, as I loitered here for fishing in the river, I concealed my rank, thinking to amuse myself at the expense of so fair a maid—what more I thought, or hoped, I will not say ; but listen to a penitent. Since I knew you, your sweetness, your purity,

and truth, worthy the highest sphere, all such ideas vanished from my mind ; and now I offer you my hand as well as heart, my rank, my name, and fortune, only too proud to call you mine, if you will have me. Sweetheart, answer me."

"Oh ! my lord, my generous, noble lord, my every hope and wish is now fulfilled—I have met with one to love, and worthy of my love ! But hold !" She paused, and mischief sparkled in her eye. "Alas ! your generosity is all in vain. It cannot be. Eve cannot marry you, you are too far above her."

"Oh ! do not say it ; you are above me as far as one human being can be above another. Oh ! Eve, my love !"

"Now stay. I said Eve could not marry you ; but suppose that Eve is naught—suppose in place of her you see a vain court beauty, the very vainest and most frivolous of all that vain and foolish throng, one whom you would not wed had she an angel's beauty, and the dowry of a queen ? Alas ! alas ! that it should be so."

"Why, what means this ? Who are you, then ?"

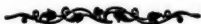
"I am that thing of paint and patches, of airs and affectations—the Countess Millamant—you would not wed her. Eve cannot marry you. What's to be done ?"

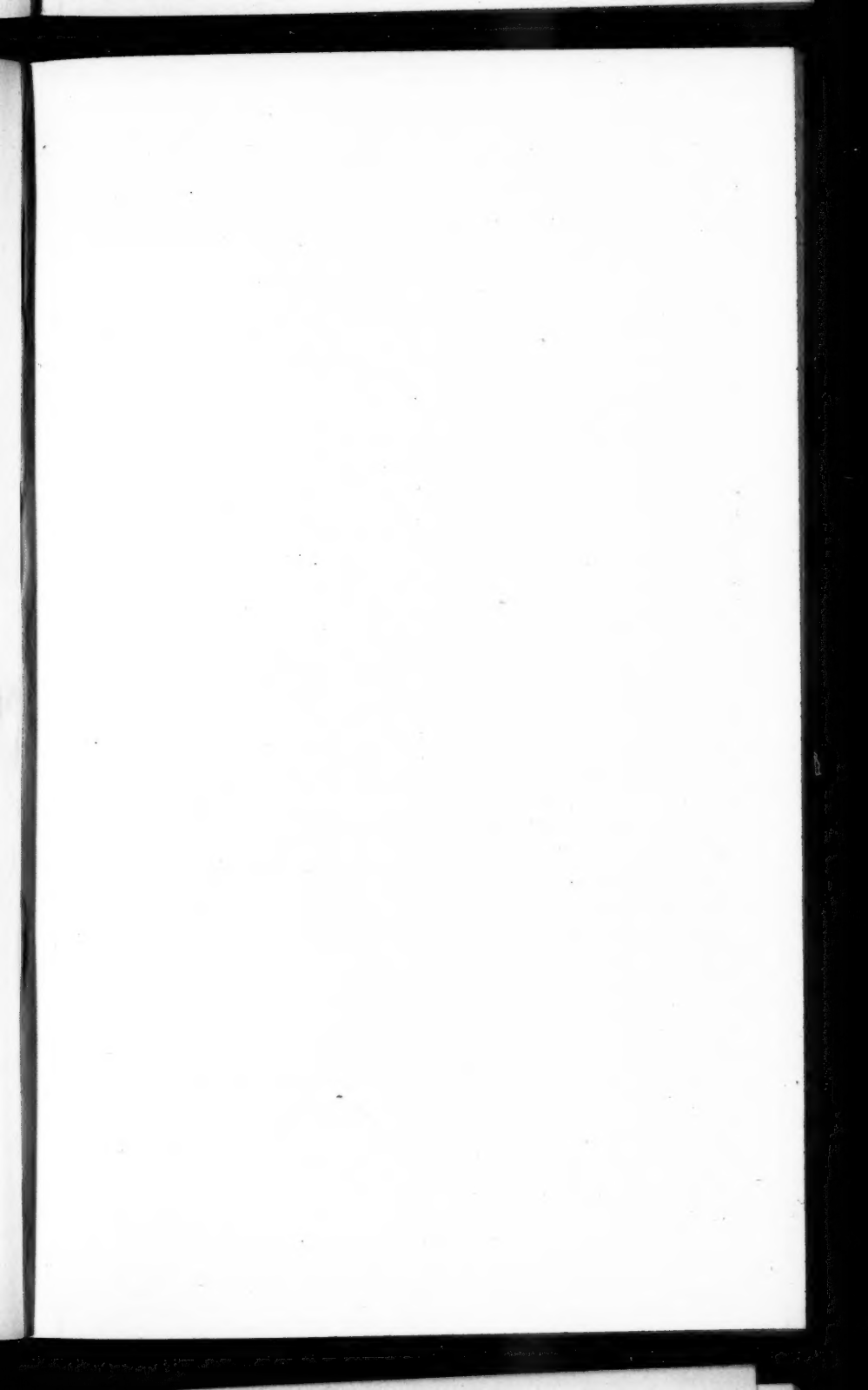
"You are the Countess Millamant ! Then I was right. I saw the likeness through the change of dress. Oh ! more dear than ever ! I know you now. What I then saw was but a mask concealing the most lovely thing on earth !"

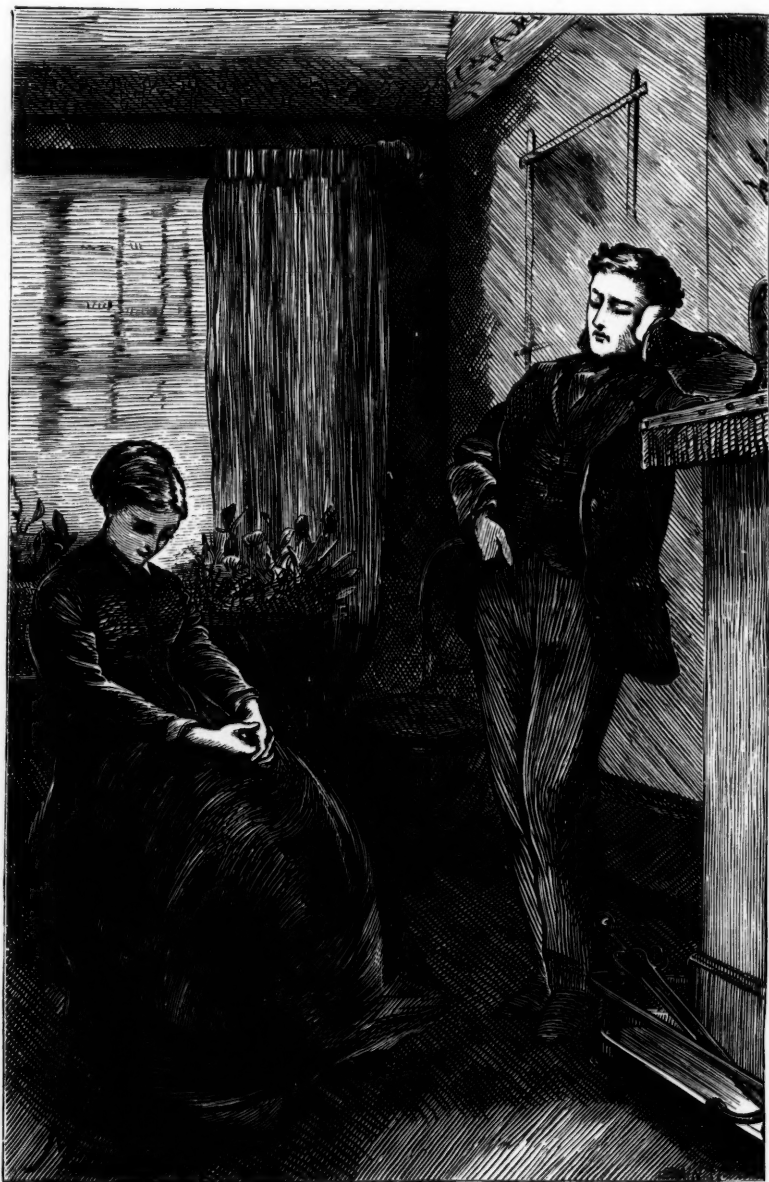
And then—must it be owned—these two high personages kissed and hugged each other, as though they were but the rustic pair they had seemed.

What more is there to tell ? Prudence and all the town were regaled with a brilliant wedding, and the lovely Marchioness of Riverdale still sometimes deigned to reign as queen of fashion, though with a different court.

They spent the greater part of their time in the country, surrounded by contented dependants and a growing family : showing by their example that moderation in all things is the best road to happiness.







M. ELLEN EDWARDS

J. SWAIN.

"They are all so helpless!" murmured Edina.